



# RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE IN THE TOWN OF BABYLON

An introduction to researching houses and buildings in the Hamlets of Copiague, Deer Park, East Farmingdale, North Amityville, North Babylon, North Lindenhurst, West Babylon, Wheatley Heights, Wyandanch, the Barrier Island communities and the Villages of Amityville, Babylon and Lindenhurst.

## Town of Babylon, Office of Historic Services

at Old Town Hall  
47 W. Main Street, Suite 2  
Babylon, NY 11702  
(631) 587-3750



*Old Town Hall, built 1917-1918*

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It would be wonderful if we had one readily accessible resource with detailed and in-depth house and building histories for our communities. Unfortunately, no one such resource exists. The history of each house is a unique research project.

This booklet is designed to help point researchers toward potential sources for house history information. But, the research work is the responsibility of the researcher.

Researching the history of your house (or building) can be exciting, much like creating your family tree. But, the research work can be confusing and take some time.

If you have questions or run into road blocks, please reach out the Town Historian's Office. We are happy to help guide you along the steps of your research.

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## WHO LIVED IN MY HOUSE? • HOW OLD IS MY HOUSE?

1. To begin, you should write down **What You Know** about your house and its owners. As you continue your research, make sure that you keep track of what you've examined, where your information was retrieved from, and to whom you've spoken.

### 2. Check property records:

- **Read your deed(s).** Below is a sample deed from 1953.

What does this deed tell us?

- Liber and Page – The book and page where the deed was filed.
- Grantor and Grantee – The names of the seller(s) and buyer(s). These are only the names of the owners of record. Historically, many properties were owned by a husband, but were sometimes owned solely by a wife; sometimes both.
- Survey Map Title – This sample property was part of a housing development surveyed on “Map Amending Section 1, Map of American Venice ... filed in the office of the Clerk of the County of Suffolk, as Map No. 224, on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1926.” This date is when the land survey map of potential buildings lots was filed. This is not the date that a house was built.

What doesn't this deed tell us?

- Deeds describe land, not the buildings on the land. (A small fraction of older deeds (pre-1900) have descriptions of maps or property drawings, but it is unlikely.)

Liber and Page	LIBER PAGE 392
Grantor (seller)	THIS INDENTURE, made the 2nd day of January, nineteen hundred and Fifty-Three <del>BETWEEN</del> VENETIAN AMERICAN PROPERTY, INC., a domestic corporation having its principal office at _____, Borough of Manhattan, City of New York,
Grantee (buyer)	party of the first part, and SYLVIA KRAMER, residing at _____, Borough of Manhattan, City of New York, party of the second part,
Property Description (All these certain lots ...)	WITNESSETH, that the party of the first part, in consideration of One (\$1.00) - - - - - - - - - - dollars, lawful money of the United States, and other good and valuable considerations paid by the party of the second part, does hereby grant and release unto the party of the second part, her heirs, executors, administrators and assigns forever, ALL these certain lots, pieces or parcels of land, with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate, lying and being on the southerly side of Merrick Road, in the Town of Babylon, County of Suffolk and State of New York and shown on a certain map entitled,
Survey Map Title (for a development)	"MAP AMENDING SECTION NO. 1, MAP of AMERICAN VENICE, situated at Copiague, Town of Babylon, Suffolk County, owned by American Venice Corporation, surveyed and subdivided by Vander Werken and Kuehnle, Civil Engineers and Surveyors, of Lynbrook and Long Beach, New York" and filed in the office of the Clerk of the County of Suffolk, as Map No. 224, on the 27th day of January, 1926, and bounded and described as follows:
Metes and Bounds	BEGINNING at the corner formed by the intersection of the easterly side of Riviera Drive West with the southerly side of Merrick Road, running thence easterly along the said southerly side of

Unfortunately, a deed does not tell you when a house was built. However, we can use other information from the deeds.

- Names of the buyer/seller. With the name(s) of the property owner(s) you can create a family tree to learn about the people that lived there. Census records recorded the people that lived in the house – children, boarders, servants, other family members – giving an occasional glimpse of the house’s occupants.
- The Survey Maps were the first step in creating a housing development or taking a large parcel of land and creating individual building lots. The date that a survey map was filed is likely the earliest date that anyone could purchase property, so a house could not have been constructed before that time.
- Trace all deeds. Start with the current deed and then locate each preceding deed. When you find a deed that is dated after the date of the survey map, you likely have the first homeowner. For example, in the sample deed, the survey map was filed in January 1926. I might find a deed from 1926 or 1927, sold by the American Venice Corporation. The buyer is likely the first homeowner.
  - However, just because you have found a 1927 deed doesn’t mean that a house was built. The person may have purchased vacant land with plans to build a house in the future. Many people purchased land on the South Shore of Long Island in the mid to late 1920s and never built houses because of the 1929 Stock Market Crash and subsequent Great Depression.
  - Look at the style of the house. Does it look like it could have been built in the 1920s? Or does it look like a 1950s house?

- With names of homeowners/occupants and housing developments/neighborhoods, you can search newspaper databases for articles about the people and the history of the neighborhood.
- **Building Department Records** – Town of Babylon, Village of Amityville, Village of Babylon, Village of Lindenhurst – The respective building departments may be able to provide information of alterations made after the early 1930s. However, building records were not normally kept prior to the 1930s. The Assessor's Office may also have property cards. Contact these departments by phone prior to your visit because historical property information may not be readily available and staff may need time to retrieve information.
  - Town of Babylon Building Department - [townofbabylonny.gov/797/Building-Department](http://townofbabylonny.gov/797/Building-Department)
  - Amityville Village Building Department - [amityville.com/160/Building-Department](http://amityville.com/160/Building-Department)
  - Babylon Village Building Department - [villageofbabylonny.gov/building-department](http://villageofbabylonny.gov/building-department)
  - Lindenhurst Village Building Department - [villageoflindenhurstny.gov/planning-board-business-meeting/building-department/building-permits/](http://villageoflindenhurstny.gov/planning-board-business-meeting/building-department/building-permits/)
- **Assessor Records** – The Town of Babylon Assessor's Office has copies of old appraisal cards – Cleminshaw Cards – commonly referred to as “Clem Cards.” Sometimes, the cards contain notes about dates of construction and alterations. A property owner can request a copy of their property's Clem Card by going to the Town Assessor's Office at Babylon Town Hall, 200 E. Sunrise Highway, Lindenhurst, with a copy of their driver's license as proof of identification. Town of Babylon Assessor's Office – <https://www.townofbabylonny.gov/133/Assessors-Office>
- **Suffolk County Clerk's Office** – Land Records, including deeds and survey maps, are recorded and kept by the Suffolk County Clerk's Office.
  - Survey maps (or subdivision maps) may be available from the Micrographics department of the Suffolk County Clerk's Office, 310 Center Drive Riverhead, NY 11901, (631) 852-2000. When contacting the Micrographics office you should be prepared to give the name, date and file number of the map. Following the example on page four: “Map Amending Section 1, Map of American Venice ... filed in the office of the Clerk of the County of Suffolk, as Map No. 224, on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1926.”
  - The following box contains excerpts from the Suffolk County Clerk's Office Historic Documents Library, with instructions for finding historic deeds.

Excerpts from the website for the **Suffolk County Clerk's Office Historic Documents Library**  
<https://suffolkcountyny.gov/Elected-Officials/County-Clerk/Historic-Documents-Library>

310 Center Drive Riverhead, NY 11901 • (631) 852-2000

Hours: 9:00AM to 5:00PM \*Monday through Friday, except Holidays designated for County Employees  
No documents will be pulled from the storage area after 4:15pm. Researchers must be finished by 4:45pm.

### Researching the History of Your House

The Office of the County Clerk holds land records dating from the mid -1600's. These do not always contain descriptions of the house or other buildings found on the land. Even so, a deed is a good place to begin researching the history of your house. Following are some first steps you should take to start this research.

- Read your current deed. Make a note of the Liber (book) and page number, which will be listed on the upper right hand corner of the deed. At the end of the description of your property you may find references to the prior deed and the Liber and page number where it was recorded. Make a note of those numbers too.
- Go to the Records Room in the Office of the County Clerk at the County Center in Riverhead.
- Go to the rows of numbered Deed Libers and find the lowest numbered Liber you found on your deed. This deed may refer you to an earlier one. Work your way backward through earlier deeds.
- If you have no Liber numbers on your deed, you can still research your house. Begin with last name of

the person from whom you bought your house and look that name up in the indexes in the Record Room. If you bought your home after 1969, you will need to use the terminals in the Public Access Room to look up this information. Land records before 1969 are indexed by both GRANTEE (buyer) and GRANTOR (seller) in large index books in the Records Room. These volumes are located on opposite sides of the room. The aisle containing the Grantor indexes has a sign hanging from the ceiling at the end of the aisle. The Grantee indexes that reference the oldest of the deeds are not indicated by a sign, go to the Historic Documents Library and the Archivist will show you where to find those books.

- The Grantor/Grantee indexes are organized as follows: From 1660-1950, all of Suffolk County is indexed in one set of books, arranged alphabetically, by the first letter of the last name, inside each volume, the records are arranged by the first letter of the first name. Beginning in 1951 through 1969 the records are divided by Town and within each town they are arranged as described above.

- There are also Mortgage Libers in the Records Room. Many times the mortgage on a property is referenced in the deed. In the case of earlier deeds this may sometimes be a good indication of when a house was constructed on a piece of land.

- As you work your way backward through the earlier deeds, you may come to one that is deeded to someone as the heir of a deceased person. Make a note of that person's name in order to look up the will at the Surrogate's Court. Many times wills are more descriptive of houses than are deeds.

- Building permits were, in general, not issued before the early 1920's but you may find reference to a "date of origin" for a house on early permits. These will be on file at your Town Clerk's Office or in the Building Department. Keep in mind that this date was given by the person applying for the building permit and may be an approximate date.

Researching the history of your house is usually a time-consuming process; so make sure you are ready to spend most of the day at County Center when you make your trip. There are copy machines available in the Records Room (25¢ a page). Some of the older deed volumes have been encapsulated in Mylar, which makes photocopying difficult, so you may have to transcribe the information you find there. There is a Cafeteria in the building. Remember to bring paper and a pencil for taking notes.

- **Historic (pre-1900) Suffolk County Land Records** can be accessed on [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org)
  - FREE, after setting up username and password.
  - Each link is typically a book in the County Clerk's Office. Grantee/Grantor Indexes, 1660-1926 and Deed books, 1660-c.1900
  - The easiest way to navigate the book page is changing the page number at the upper left. Remember, this is not the page number in the book, just the page number for the digital scan. Images can be downloaded from the website.
- 3. **Consult the NYS Cultural Resource Information System** (<https://cris.parks.ny.gov>), and locate your property to see if there is any historic information or a "Building Structures Inventory Form," filed for the property. If an inventory form was filed for your property, documents may provide the following:
  - Dates of original construction, alterations and relocations
  - Names of previous owners
  - Descriptions of the building materials and condition; Notable features of the building and site
  - Notes about the potential historical and architectural importance of the building/site

4. **Consult atlases** to see if a building was recorded. The links, below, direct to the atlases books in the collections of the New York Public Library.

- 1858 – [Map of Suffolk County, L.I., N.Y.: from actual surveys](#), J. Chace, John Douglass, and Robert Pearsall Smith; Published by John Douglas, Philadelphia, PA.
  - Not a lot of detail about specific buildings unless they were located in downtown areas, usually just names.
  - Town of Babylon not yet created; it shows the old Town of Huntington. There are small detailed maps for Amityville and Babylon.
  - These were used as large wall maps. There are copies on display at the Copiague Memorial Library and the Town of Babylon History Museum.
- 1873 – [Atlas of Long Island, NY](#) published by Beers, Comstock & Cline
  - There is a Town of Babylon map and detailed maps for Amityville, Babylon, Deer Park and North Babylon.
- 1888 – [Atlas of the towns Babylon, Islip, and south part of Brookhaven](#) in Suffolk County, NY, *New York*, F.W. Beers & Co.; Published by Wendelken & Co.
  - There is a Town of Babylon map and detailed maps for Amityville, Babylon, Deer Park, Lindenhurst (Breslau), North Babylon and the barrier islands (Oak Beach, Captree Island).
- 1902 – [Atlas of Suffolk County, Long Island, New York, Volume One: South Side – Ocean Shore](#), Merritt B. Hyde; Published by E. B. Hyde, 1902
  - There is a Town of Babylon map and detailed maps for Amityville, Babylon, Lindenhurst, and the barrier islands (Oak Beach, Captree Island).
- 1915 – [Atlas of Part of Suffolk County, Long Island, New York, South Side – Ocean Shore, Volume One](#); Published by E. Belcher Hyde
  - There is a Town of Babylon map and detailed maps for Amityville, Babylon, Copiague, Lindenhurst, Wyandanch, and the barrier islands (Oak Beach, Captree Island, Oak Island Beach, Muncie Island and Gilgo Beach).

**Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlases.** Created for the insurance industry, the earliest Sanborn maps typically show just a small area of a community, specifically a business district or other areas with dense numbers of buildings. As communities expanded, the areas covered by the maps also expanded; but there are large areas that were never mapped. Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlases typically do not have owner/occupant information, but can tell you if the building existed as of a particular year/month. Sanborn published several Keys for the maps, like the one displayed below. Or, Google the words *Sanborn Map Key* to find other keys for interpreting colors and symbols on the Sanborn maps.

Use the links below to access the Sanborn maps, or *check with your local library for information about accessing the Sanborn ProQuest database.*

- Amityville
  - [November 1890](#) (5 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [February 1897](#) (6 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [October 1904](#) (6 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [March 1910](#) (10 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [November 1915](#) (15 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - February 1925 (15 pages, available through ProQuest database; b&w only)
  - August 1950 (15 pages, available through ProQuest database; b&w only)

- Babylon village
  - [January 1885](#) (2 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [December 1890](#) (7 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [March 1897](#) (9 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [October 1902](#) (10 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [November 1908](#) (13 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [May 1915](#) (21 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [October 1923](#) (23 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - September 1929 (23 pages, available through ProQuest database; b&w only)
  - July 1943 (23 pages, available through ProQuest database; b&w only)
- Barrier Islands (these maps show parts of Oak Beach, Oak Island, the Oak Beach Association and Muncie Island, except 1943 because Muncie Island had been destroyed)
  - see [Babylon May 1915](#) (Library of Congress) – pages 19-21
  - see [Babylon October 1923](#) (Library of Congress) – pages 19-21
  - see *Babylon September 1929* (ProQuest database) – pages 21-23
  - see *Babylon July 1943* (ProQuest database) – pages 21-22
- Copiague (this map shows parts of the hamlet, not the whole community)
  - [April 1948](#) (7 pages, Library of Congress; color)
- East Farmingdale
  - [September 1920](#) (8 pages, Library of Congress; color) – pages 1, 5, 7 and 8 show a small area of East Farmingdale (around the west end of Conklin Street)
  - *Farmingdale June 1929* (16 pages, available through ProQuest database; b&w only) – pages 7, 12, 13 and 16 show a small area of East Farmingdale (around the west end of Conklin Street)
  - *Farmingdale May 1942* (17 pages, available through ProQuest database; b&w only) – pages 7, 12, 13 and 16 show a small area of East Farmingdale (around the west end of Conklin Street)
- Lindenhurst
  - [October 1902](#) (2 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [December 1908](#) (6 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [June 1915](#) (6 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - [March 1925](#) (8 pages, Library of Congress; color)
  - November 1933 (13 pages, available through ProQuest database; b&w only)
  - October 1949 (13 pages, available through ProQuest database; b&w only)
- West Babylon (small areas of southeastern West Babylon, north of the railroad, bordering Babylon village)
  - see [Babylon May 1915](#) (Library of Congress) – pages 11-12
  - see [Babylon October 1923](#) (Library of Congress) – pages 11-12 and 22
  - see *Babylon September 1929* (ProQuest database) – pages 11-12 and 17
  - see *Babylon July 1943* (ProQuest database) – pages 11-12 and 17

# KEY

	Fire proof construction. (OR FIRE RESISTIVE CONSTN)		Window opening in first story.
	Adobe building.		Window openings in second and third stories.
	Stone building.		Window openings in second and fourth stories.
	Concrete, lime, cinder or cement brick		Windows with wired glass.
	Hollow concrete or cement block constn		Windows with iron or tin clad shutters
	Concrete or reinforced concrete constn		Window openings tenth to twenty-second stories.
	Tile building.		Open elevator.
	Brick building with frame cornice.		Frame enclosed elevator.
	" " " stone front. " " " frame side (DIVIDED BY FRAME PARTITION)		" " " " with traps.
	Brick veneered building.		" " " " self closing traps.
	" and frame building.		Concrete block enclosed elevator with traps.
	Frame building, brick lined.		Tile enclosed elevator with self closing traps.
	" " metal clad		Brick enclosed elev. with wired glass door.
	Frame building.		Iron chimney (WITH SPARK ARRESTOR)
	Iron building.		Brick chimney.
	Tenant building occupied by various manufacturing or occupancies		Ground elevation.
	Frame building covered with asbestos		Block number.
	Brick building with brick or metal cornice		Vertical steam boiler.
	Brick building with brick or metal cornice		Vertical pipe or stand pipe.
	Fire wall 6 inches above roof.		Automatic fire alarm.
	" " " 12 " " "		Independent electric plant.
	" " " 18 " " "		Automatic sprinklers.
	" " " 36 " " "		Automatic chemical sprinklers.
	Figures 8, 12, 16 indicate thickness of wall in inches.		Automatic sprinklers in part of building only. (NOTE UNDER SYMBOL INDICATES PROTECTED PORTION OF BUILDING)
	Wall without opening and size in inches.		Not sprinklered.
	Wall with openings on floors as designated.		Outside vertical pipe on fire escape.
	Opening with single iron or tin clad door.		Fire alarm box.
	" " double iron " " " doors.		Single hydrant.
	" " standard fire doors.		Double " (36) Under page number refers to corresponding page of previous edition.
	Openings with wired glass doors.		Triple "
	Drive or passage way.		Quadruple hydrant of the "High Pressure Fire Service"
	Stable.		Fire alarm box of the "High Pressure Fire Service"
	Auto. House or private garage.		Water pipes of the "High Pressure Fire Service" and hydrants of the "High Pressure Fire Service" as shown on key map.
	Solid brick with interior walls of C.B. or C.B. and brick mixed.		Water pipes and size in inches.
	Mixed construction of C.B. and brick with one wall of solid brick.		Water pipes of private supply
	Mixed construction of C.B. and brick with one wall faced with 4" brick.		House numbers shown nearest to buildings are official or actually up on buildings.
	Mixed construction of C.B. and brick throughout.		Old house numbers shown furthest from buildings.

Copyright, 1953, Sanborn Map Co.

<https://www.library.illinois.edu/max/collections/sanborn-fire-insurance-maps-new/sanborns-web-resources-new/>

**5. History Collections** – books, newspaper, clippings, ephemera, photographs – are available at many libraries and historical societies. Materials are typically considered “closed stacks” – original materials are usually accessed and retrieved by staff only, due to the rarity and fragility of the items. It is highly recommended that researchers contact the institutions to discuss their research questions, or make an appointment. Materials are usually not available “on demand” during regular visitor hours.

Please note, the existence of house photos is rare. History collections usually contain items that were given to the institution. So, if previous homeowners/researchers did not deposit photos, etc. with an institution, then the institution is unlikely to have copies.

### **Libraries**

Amityville Public Library, 19 John Street, Amityville, NY 11701; (631) 264-0567

Babylon Public Library, 24 S. Carll Ave., Babylon, NY 11702; (631) 669-1624

Copiague Memorial Public Library, 50 Deauville Blvd., Copiague, NY 11726, (631) 691-1111

Deer Park Public Library, 44 Lake Avenue, Deer Park, NY 11729, (631) 586-3000

Farmingdale Public Library, 116 Merritts Road, Farmingdale, NY 11757, (516) 249-9090

Half Hollow Hills Community Libraries (serves Wheatley Heights, part of East Farmingdale)

- 55 Vanderbilt Parkway, Dix Hills, NY 11746, (631) 421-4530
- 510 Sweet Hollow Road, Melville, NY 11747, (631) 421-4535

Lindenhurst Memorial Public Library, 1 Lee Avenue, Lindenhurst, NY 11757, (631) 957-7755

North Babylon Public Library, 815 Deer Park Ave., North Babylon, NY 11703, (631) 669-4020

West Babylon Public Library, 211 Route 109, West Babylon, NY 11704, (631) 669-5445

Wyandanch Public Library, 14 S. 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Wyandanch, NY 11798, (631) 643-4848

### **Historians and Historical Societies**

Town of Babylon Historian's Office, 47 W. Main St., Babylon, NY 11772; (631) 587-3750. Call for research appointment.

- Town Historian – Mary Cascone

Babylon Town Historical Society, 600 Albin Avenue, West Babylon, NY 11704. Please contact the Town Historian's Office at (631) 587-3750.

Amityville Historical Society, 170 Broadway, Amityville, 11701, (631) 598-1486 (Museum Hours: Sun., Tue., & Fri., 2:00-4:00pm. Call for research appointment.)

- Village Historians – Joe Guidice and Ken Lang

Lindenhurst Historical Society, 272 S. Wellwood Ave., Lindenhurst, NY 11757, (631) 226-0209 (Museum Hours: Wed., Fri. & Sat., 2:00-4:00pm. Call for research appointment.)

- Village Historian – Anna Jaeger

Village of Babylon Historical & Preservation Society, W. Main St. and Carll Ave., Babylon, NY 11772: (631) 669-1756 (Museum Hours: Wed. & Sat., 1:00-3:00pm. Call for research appointment.)

- Village Historian – Wayne Horsley

### **Aerial Photographs – [Suffolk County GIS Viewer](#)**

- FREE. No signup needed. (Click “terms and conditions” and OK to enter.)
- Aerial Images – 1947, 1962, 1978, 1984, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2020
- Hover between historical images. Using print feature, download images in JPG or PDF.