Where Do I Begin the Research Process?

1. The best place to begin researching is at the County Clerk and Recorder’s Office (Gallatin County Courthouse: 311 W. Main, Room 203; 406-582-3050). From here, you can locate deeds to discover the names of the people who sold the home to you, the names of who sold the home to them, and so on.

- It is important to keep in mind that you are researching the people who lived in the home and not the house itself when you begin the research process.

Be prepared to spend some time at the Clerk and Recorder’s Office. Locating deeds can be time consuming depending on how many people have previously lived in your home.

- Copies are allowed at .75 cents per page.

2. Once you have the names of all your home’s previous owners plan a visit to the Gallatin Historical Society (Pioneer Museum: 17 W. Main St.; 406-522-8122). Their Research Center is free to the public. If you are lucky, they may have old photographs of your home on file.

The photos of houses are organized by address in a large binder—ask a museum employee to help you locate your home.

- Copies are allowed at .25 cents per page.

Note: Do not become discouraged if you have not found information yet! There are still more places for you to look.

3. If you did not find information in the Pioneer Museum, contact the local building office to search for building permits for your home. These permits may contain the name of the architect who designed your home, and the date it was constructed. (Bozeman Building Office: 20 E. Olive; 406-582-2375). Take note of everything you find on the building permits.

4. Another great place to continue your research is at the local library (Bozeman Public Library: 626 E. Main St.; 406-582-2410). Begin your library research in the Montana Room—you will need to ask a Reference Librarian for permission to access materials and unlock the bookcases. The Polk City Directories are an excellent source to locate the names of people who have lived in your...
home along with a small amount of background information about them. They are arranged by addresses rather than last names beginning in the 1927 edition; before that, they are arranged by last names. The directories date back to the late 1800s—they are a great resource if you did not find what you needed in the deeds.

Perhaps the occupant of your home was a famous resident in Bozeman. Look in the Progressive Men of Montana (online also—see web address on back page) and Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley: A History to learn more.

- Beware: Not all the facts you read in Progressive Men are true. The authors had a tendency to embellish.

Another excellent source at the library are the old editions of newspapers such as the Bozeman Chronicle. Ask a librarian to help you use indexes to find obituaries of the people who have lived in your home. These may lead you to more clues and stories about your house, and the families who resided there.

The library also has a binder called the Historic Resources of Bozeman. Here you will find information about the historic districts in Bozeman and information on some of the houses and historic buildings in the city.

- Printing is available. The first 5 pages are FREE. Anything after that is .10 cents per page. Color prints are $1.00.

5. A final source to use when researching your home is Montana State University Library’s Special Collections. They are located on the second floor of the Renne Library on the university campus (406-994-4242).

- It is recommended to make an appointment before heading to the Renne Library Special Collections.

The MSU Special Collections has an array of old photographs that could contain photos of your home or the people who have lived there. It is a good idea to explore their website before heading there: www.lib.montana.edu/archives/. (The website also contains the rules of expected etiquette from it’s visitors). On their website there is a link to their Architectural Drawings Collection Catalog which allows you to search architectural drawings—you are not guaranteed to find drawings of your home.

The MSU Special Collections also has past copies of the Avant Courier—a newspaper source which may contain information not found in the Bozeman Chronicle at the public library.

- The MSU Special Collections does not have their entire photograph database available online at this time.
Useful Websites to Aid You In Your Research:
www.lib.montana.edu/archives/ (MSU Special Collections)
www.gis.mt.gov/ (Montana Cadastral Mapping Program)
www.forms.lib.umt.edu (Progressive Men of Montana)
www.lig.umt.edu (Leeson’s History of Montana 1885)
www.bozemanlibrary.org/ (Bozeman Public Library)
www.pioneermuseum.org (Gallatin Historical Society)

Gallatin Historical Society
Pioneer Museum
317 W. Main St.
Bozeman, Mt 59715
Phone: 406-522-8122
Fax: 406-522-0367
Email: pioneermuseum@montana.com

Bozeman Public Library
626 E. Main St.
Bozeman, MT 59715
Phone: 406-582-2410
TDD: 406-582-2301
Fax: 406-582-2424

MSU Libraries
P. O. Box 173320
Phone: 406-994-3171 (Reference)
406-994-3139 (Circulation)
406-994-2851 (Fax)

- Photos are courtesy of the Gallatin Historical Society (Pioneer Museum) and the Bozeman Public Library.

- This pamphlet was created in May 2009.