

Step 6: Context

- Ridgewood history materials are available in the Heritage Center, in the section HERITAGE REF 974.922.
- Make an appointment with the Local History librarian Sarah Kiefer to view materials in the Ridgewood Archives.
- Search the Heritage Catalog for information on local history: <https://localhistory.ridgewoodlibrary.org/>

Step 7: Compile the History

- Document your sources, include photos, maps and excerpts from documents and newspapers.
- Write it down for yourself, your family, the next people to live in the house.
- Donate a copy to the Bolger Heritage Center Archives.



125 North Maple Avenue
Ridgewood, NJ 07450
201-670-5600 x2135

HeritageCenter@RidgewoodLibrary.org
www.LocalHistory.RidgewoodLibrary.org

Monday - Thursday 9 am to 9 pm
Friday 9 am to 6 pm
Saturday 9 am to 5 pm
Sunday 1 pm to 5 pm

*Please check Library website for holiday closings

Sample History: 70 Crest Road

House history research might not be the easiest thing but when it's done right, the result can be quite rewarding. We would like to share a perfect example of a Ridgewood House History Research Project:



1904: A house was built at 52 Overlook Drive (the address was later changed to 70 Crest Road). The original owners were David J. O'Neill and his wife, Ella. Mr. O'Neill was born in Brooklyn, NY in the 1840s and moved to Ridgewood in 1892.

A Civil War veteran, he was appointed to the Village Trustees and served as Ridgewood's 4th Fire Chief from 1899-1910. The Seventh Directory of the Erie Railroad for the year 1904 confirms that Chief O'Neill was living at 52 Overlook. Upon his retirement in 1910, he remained active in the Exempt and Relief Association.

The 1930 Federal Census shows him living alone in Ridgewood after having been married twice.

1907: A deed dated October 5, 1907 indicates that the land and premises at 52 Overlook Drive were sold to Paula Wolfsohn (wife of Henry Wolfsohn) by David J. and Ella O'Neill. The Wolfsohns used the Ridgewood home primarily as a summer residence.
1927: Paula Wolfsohn (widow) died on April 21, 1927. The land and premises at 52 Overlook were deeded to Clara Hamersley, daughter of Henry and Paula, on July 26, 1927. George Hamersley, husband of Clara, was the executor of Paula's will.

The 1930 Federal Census shows the Hamersleys living in Manhattan at 2178 Broadway. Throughout the time they owned the Ridgewood home, it was used as a summer residence and a rental property.

**Full research available at BHC and on the Heritage Catalog



Researching a House History



A Guide to Tracing the History of Your Ridgewood Home

Step 1: Locate the House in Time and Space

- **Check the Ridgewood Historic Sites Survey books and map: HERITAGE REF 974.922 BER V1 & V2**
 - Find your address on the historic sites survey map.
 - If it is in a District or has a number, note it and look it up in the books. If it is in a District or Streetscape, also read about the neighborhood at the beginning of the section.
- **Check current Tax Assessment records.** Dates of construction may not be correct; however, you can get dates of the most recent transfers of the property.
- **Village website** (https://taxrecords-nj.com/pub/cgi/prc6.cgi?district=0200&ms_user=ctb02) for year purchased, year built (reliability varies widely), lot size, owner for last 3 years, assessed value.
- **Check the maps in the HERITAGE ARCHIVES collection (appointment required).** The maps provide different information such as footprint of house, homeowner, dimensions, lot outlines.
 - 1916, 1925, 1928 & 1930 Sanborn Insurance Maps
 - 1925 tax map
 - 1913 tax map
 - 1912/13 Bromley Atlas
 - 1908 tax map
 - 1902 Robinson Map
 - 1876 atlas (HERITAGE REF 917.4921 WAL)
 - 1861 Corey Hopkins map (displayed on wall)
 - Online Sanborn Maps (1896, 1901, 1906, 1911): library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbrc/aids/sanborn/bergen/ridgewood.html
 - Aerial Maps of NJ: njstateatlas.com/1930 and historicaerials.com

Step 2: Identify Past Residents

- **Use directories to check for past residents.** You can search Ridgewood “City Directories” on microfilm for the following years: 1897, 1904-1914, 1926-1973 or Ancestry LE to search the City Directories for years 1926-1960.
 - Some later phonebooks available by appointment.

- **Find past owners by doing a deed search at the courthouse in Hackensack.** The records are open to the general public to conduct searches.
 - The Searching Vault contains over 300 years of land recordings. The deed records begin in 1785 and the mortgage records begin in 1765.
 - Some records are computerized and some are available only through the deed books, but all must be accessed on site. The records cannot be searched by property location, but are listed by grantor and grantee, for which there are indexes.
 - Copying is 5 cents per page; maps are \$3.



Step 3: What Were Residents' Lives Like?

- **Find past residents in the Federal Census:** This is indexed by name and is available on Ancestry LE (accessible at RPL). Federal censuses were taken every 10 years and the ones publicly available for NJ are 1830-1940 (except 1890).
- **Search newspaper databases.**
 - NY Times Historical and ProQuest Historical NJ Collection are available onsite or with RW card.
 - Newspapers.com (Ridgewood News 1891-present day) is available at the library only.
- **Find obituaries.**
 - Identify the date of death by using the directories, Social Security Death Index, or search papers like Newspapers.com.
- **Examine wills of people who died while they owned the house.** 19th-century wills are especially interesting.
 - NJ Index of wills, prior to 1901 HERITAGE REF 929.3749
 - Probate records at familysearch.org
 - Abstracts of wills HERITAGE REF 929.3749 ARCHIVES
- **Interview neighbors and past owners** (or their descendants) to gather memories, documents and photographs.

Step 4: Photographs

- Schedule an appointment for access to Heritage Archives
- Look through published Ridgewood history books HERITAGE REF 974.922.
- Schedule an appointment to view the 1919 Ridgewood Herald Supplement.
- Search the Heritage Catalog. (<https://ridgewood.catalogaccess.com/>)

Step 5: Identify the Architectural Style

- Ask past residents or their descendants.
- *The Architecture of Bergen County, NJ* by T. Robins Brown (720.9749 BRO, HERITAGE REF 720.9749 BRO)
- *Building by the Book: Pattern-Book Architecture in NJ* by Robert P. Guter & Janet W. Foster (HERITAGE REF 728.37 GUT)
- *Country and Suburban Homes of the Prairie School Period* by Hermann Valentin Von Holst (728.022 VON)
- *Craftsman Homes: Architecture and Furnishings of the*
- *American Arts and Crafts Movement* by Gustav Stickley (728.373 CRA; see also 728.373 STI)
- *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia and Lee McAlester (728.37 M114 & HERITAGE REF 728.37 MCA)
- *Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company* by Katherine Cole Stevenson & H. Ward Jandl (728.373 STE)
- *The New Jersey House* by Helen Schwartz (HERITAGE REF 728 SCH)
- *Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses & Families in Northern New Jersey & Southern New York* by Rosalie Bailey (728 BAI & HERITAGE REF 929.3749 BAI)
- *Turn-of-the-Century Houses, Cottages & Villas* by R.W. Shoppell (728.37 TUR)

