

## This Old House Revisited/History Lesson

This lesson provides basic steps for both elementary and secondary level students to conduct a historical investigation of a house and its landscape.

### Key Messages

1. Houses and their landscapes undergo changes over time.
2. Historical research helps us understand why these changes occur.
3. Some older houses have a significant (his) story and are worthy of preservation.

### Example

The Petersen House in Tempe was built 120 years ago in the middle of a 2,000 acre cattle ranch. Today, it is a city museum with a 3.5-acre city park called Petersen Park.

### Objectives

1. Students will be able to choose a house to study. Here are your four options:
  - 1a. Students will be able to identify changes that occurred to the house and its landscape over time by conducting interviews with persons who have first-hand knowledge of the house.
  - 1b. Students will be able to identify changes that occurred to the house and its landscape over time by comparing photographs of the house and land taken at different times.
  - 1c. Students will be able to identify changes that occurred to the house and its landscape over time by doing research at a historic house, their local library and/or history museum.
2. Students will be able to explain why it is important to preserve a greater appreciation for significant historic houses.

### Arizona History Standards

Social Studies Strand 1 – American History

Concept 1: Research Skills for History

Concept 2: Early Civilizations

Concept 5: Westward Expansion

### Possible Preparation

- Decide whether to focus on, and if possible, visit a local historic home or students' own homes (houses, apartments, mobile homes, etc).
- Organize a field trip to the Tempe Center for the Arts' Gallery exhibit, Arizona Landscapes (Optional).
- Preview the [This Old House Revisited - Interviews with the Residents of the Petersen House PowerPoint](#).
- Preview the Discussion Questions at the end of each section of the PowerPoint.
- Preview the [Vocabulary Definitions \(pdf\)](#).
- Preview [How to Do Historical Research of a House and its Landscape \(pdf\)](#).
- Preview the Elementary / Secondary Worksheets and choose which is appropriate for your students.
- Choose which research objective(s) are appropriate for your students (1a / 1b/ 1c).

## Teacher Resources

[This Old House Revisited - Interviews with the Residents of the Petersen House PowerPoint Vocabulary Definitions \(pdf\)](#)  
[How to do Historical Research about a House \(pdf\)](#)  
[Elementary Worksheet \(pdf\)](#)  
[Secondary Worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

## Websites

[Petersen House Museum](#)  
[Video: Is Your House a Queen?](#)  
[Tempe History Museum](#)

## Student Activities

- Visit a local historic home (if possible) or ask students to investigate their own homes.
- View the [This Old House Revisited - Interviews with the Residents of the Petersen House PowerPoint](#)
- Select a house for historical research.
- Follow instructions using the document: [How to do Historical Research about a House](#).
- Visit the local history museum, historical society or library (Optional).
- Complete one or both of the worksheets (Elementary or Secondary).
- Write the (his) story of the house.

## Extension Activity Options

Create one of the following: album, PowerPoint or videos

## Assessment Checklist

OBJECTIVE 1a. Students will be able to identify changes that occurred to a house and its landscape over time by conducting interviews with persons who have first-hand knowledge of the house.  
(Student included information from his or her interviews in his or her “A Story about a House.”)

OBJECTIVE 1b. Students will be able to identify changes that occurred to a house and its landscape over time by comparing photographs of the house and land taken at different times.  
(In a report, album, PowerPoint or video, the student used photos across time to document changes in a house.)

OBJECTIVE 1c. Students will be able to identify changes that occurred to a house and its landscape over time by doing research at a historic house, their local library and/or history museum.  
(In a report, album, PowerPoint or video, the student included information found at a historic house, local library and/or history museum as evidence of changes in a house across time.)

OBJECTIVE 2. Students will be able to explain why it is important to preserve a greater appreciation for the preservation of significant old houses.  
(The students contributed to a discussion of preservation of significant old buildings and supported her/his ideas with reasons.)

## Historical research about a house and its landscape

(Note: Italicized words are defined in the Vocabulary Definitions)

What is a historical investigation of a house and its landscape? A historical investigation of a house and its landscape is somewhat like an archeological investigation - the more you dig, the more you find. It's fun, and it's easy. Here's how:

First, choose a house. Walk or drive around your community and look for old historic houses or choose your own home (house, apartment, mobile home, etc.). Even if it is a new home, it has a story and its landscape has changed.

Second, ask yourself:

### 1. What do I already know about the house and its landscape?

Put that information in written form or take or draw pictures of all sides of the house and any unusual details on the outside of the house or in the landscape. (See the Elementary Worksheet)

### 2. Whom can I ask about the house?

You can interview your parents, grandparents, current occupants, previous owners, neighbors, gardeners and more

- a. Ask if you may interview them about the history of the house and its landscape.
- b. Set a date.
- c. Develop a list of questions you want to ask them. This is a very important step to do before you do an interview. (See the oral interview worksheet for secondary students)
- d. Bring a recorder or write down their answers.
- e. Ask to see and copy photographs of the house and its landscape taken over time (before and during the time the house was built to the present).

### 3. What kinds of historical resources are there?

- Oral resources are people's remembrances of the past.
- Written resources include letters, legal documents like wills and deeds, insurance policies and diaries.
- Visual resources include the building, land and landmarks around it, drawings, maps, paintings, photographs and videos.

### 4. Where else can I go to find out about the history of the house?

- Local library
- Local history museum
- Internet search of recommended sites. (See Resources)

### 5. What do I do with the historical resources I've gathered?

- a. Write and/or illustrate a story of the history of the house and its landscape.
- b. Make a PowerPoint presentation about the house.
- c. Make a video about the house.
- d. Share your history of the house with your classmates, family, friends and other interested persons.

## This Old House Revisited – Vocabulary Definitions

Adobe brick	Sun-dried brick made of clay and straw commonly used in places having little rainfall.
Architect	One who designs and supervises the construction of buildings.
Canal	A long, deep, wide, artificial waterway created to bring water a distance from a river or large body of water to irrigate land for farming or ranching. (Also see “ditch”)
Desert	Regions of the world with 10 or fewer inches of annual precipitation (rain or snow).
Ditch	A long, narrow channel or trench dug in the ground along a roadside or edge of a field for irrigation or drainage. (Also see “canal”)
Gift-deeded	Property is transferred without payment of money.
History	Study of the past.
Homestead	House and surrounding land where the family lives.
The Homestead Act	Any citizen, or intended citizen, who never bore arms against the United States, could claim 160 acres of federal land west of the Mississippi River for \$1.25 an acre if he or she improved the plot by building a house and cultivating the land. President Lincoln signed this law during the Civil War in 1862.
House-styles	Names used to classify buildings according to their appearance, structure, materials and historic period. Houses belong to the same classification or style when they share many of the same characteristics such as the shape of the roof; size and number of stories; window size, shape and placement; decorative details such as brackets and cornice trim; footprint and floor plan and historic period. A simple “Adobe-style” is popular in places where there is little rain. The “American Queen Anne Victorian-style” was popular across the United States in the 1890s and early 1900s. The “Craftsman Bungalow-style” was popular in the 1930s.
Immigrants	Persons who leave one country and settle permanently in another.
Irrigate	Supply dry land with water by means of canals and ditches to grow food crops.
Landscape	Portion of land which the eye can see including all the objects it contains.
Prehistoric	Time before there were written records.
Territorial	Refers to when Arizona was a territory or a part of the U.S. and was not yet a state but did have its own local legislature.
Veranda	Porch or balcony usually roofed, extending along the outside of a building.
Will	Legal written document by which a person declares his or her wishes regarding the disposal of his or her property or estate after death.

# Story about a House



## Elementary Worksheet

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Picture of a House (Place a photo or drawing of a house)

This is a story about a house. In the beginning... When taking notes

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# Story about a House



## Secondary Worksheet: Oral History Interview

(When taking notes or digitally recording an oral history, you need to ask permission first.)

Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee Name: (Print) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

(Note to the interviewee: By signing this page you are giving permission to the student interviewer to take notes, digitally record and utilize the information from your interview for educational purposes.)

### General Information about the House

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Who lives in the house?: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

### Interview Questions

How do you know about this house?

When was this house built?

What was the original purpose of the house (e.g. home, office, farm, ranch)?

Who built the house (Name and information about the owner, architect, builder)?

Of what materials is this house made?

How much land belonged with the house when it was built?

Were there other buildings on the land? If yes, what were they?

Who else lived/worked in this house?

What changes happened to the house and/or grounds?

Do you have pictures/drawings/videos of this house? When were they taken?

May I copy the pictures/drawings/videos?

Can you tell me an interesting or unusual story about this house?

Continue writing on the back of this paper.

# Questor Questions



## About the Peterson House



Look at the old photograph of the Petersen House.

Which of these elements can you point out? (Steps, stained glass window, porch railing, decorative roof trim, dormer up on the roof, window railings?)



What building materials do you think were made to build the house?

Compare the photographs taken 120 years apart. How has the landscape around the house changed?

How is the landscape similar?



In 1892, when Arizona was still a Territory, Niels Petersen, a successful cattle rancher built a two story Queen Anne Victorian-style house for his bride, Susanna. Back then, the house was five miles south of a small town named Tempe, located at the northern part of the Sonoran Desert. It was surrounded by shade trees, fields of crops and grazing cows.

What do you think is the oldest building in your neighborhood?

Today, the Petersen House is part of the Tempe History Museum and the land around the house is a small public park.

Do you believe Susanna and Niels Petersen would recognize their house today?

Do you believe they would recognize the landscape?

Why do you think the city of Tempe restored the Petersen House?

