

# Home History Project

You're a detective.  
Here's your mission:

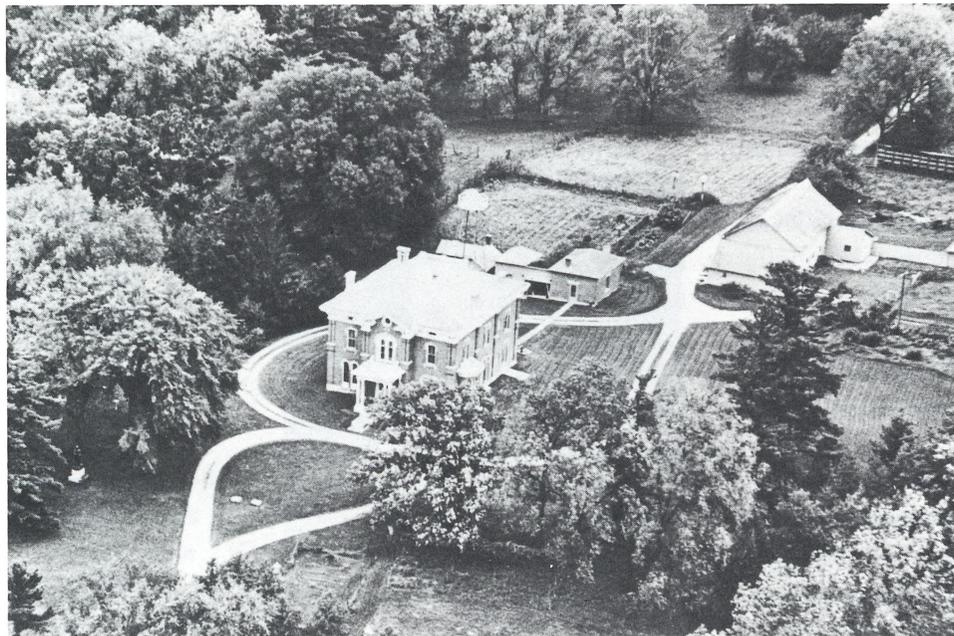
Find out all you can about the history of your own home.

To help you, The Home History Project highlights a famous Iowa home, Montauk. It's a historic site owned by the State Historical Society of Iowa in Clermont.

The following three pages provide clues to help you uncover the history of the house. (Remember,

you can ask the same kinds of questions about your own home!)

The first five readers who send us histories about their own homes will receive a free subscription to *The Goldfinch*. Send us at least a one-page description of your home's history using photographs, interviews, maps, newspapers, and drawings. Send to: Home History Project, *The Goldfinch*, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806.



High on a hill above the northeastern Iowa town of Clermont, stands a large red brick mansion. It was built in 1874 by William Larrabee, Iowa's 12th governor, and his wife Anna Appelman Larrabee. The home is now a state historic site. The Larrabee's daughter, Anna, lived at Montauk after her parents' deaths, until she died at age 96 in 1965. Thousands of schoolchildren and tourists visit the mansion every year. Unlike most historic homes, it is preserved with furniture and objects that either belonged to the family when they lived there. The photo above shows a bird's-eye view of the house and surrounding buildings.

When you were a little kid, no matter where you lived, did you draw a house using a square with a triangle for the roof?

If you look carefully, you'll see that homes are not just squares and triangles. All kinds of shapes appear on

homes. To be a good home history detective you gotta SEE your details!

Look at this photo of Montauk. Circle all of the shapes and features you can find.



### Can you find?

- ① a circle
- ② a square
- ③ a rectangle
- ④ a triangle
- ⑤ an arch
- ⑥ a balcony
- ⑦ a column or pillar
- ⑧ a lightning rod
- ⑨ a porch

#### Ask Yourself

- ① How do shapes influence the way buildings look?
- ② What shapes are in the building you live in?



If you visit Montauk today, much of the house looks like it did at the turn of the century. Like many historic homes, the furniture and family possessions have been preserved. But sometimes it's hard to imagine people living in the rooms.

Look at these two photographs to find clues about what kinds of activities the Larrabee family might have done in each of these rooms. Circle three activities in each photograph that the family could have done here 100 years ago. Answers on page 30.



- 1 Rock a baby to sleep
- 2 Listen to a CD
- 3 In-line skate
- 4 Play the piano
- 5 Play Nintendo
- 6 Have a recital

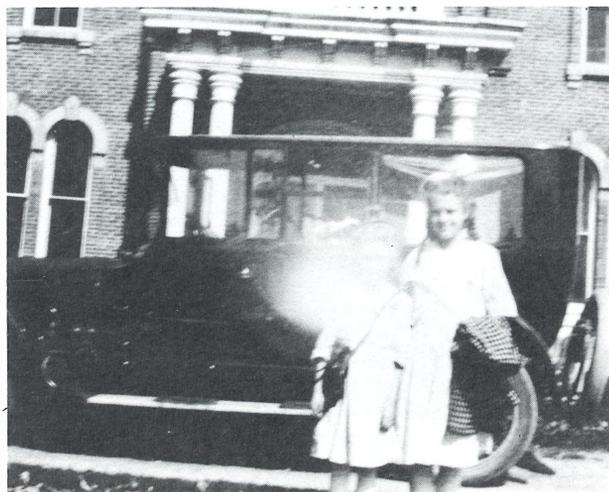
- 1 Wave a flag
- 2 Sleep
- 3 Read a book
- 4 Light a lamp
- 5 Talk on the phone
- 6 Play on a computer

### Ask Yourself

- 1 What are the clues that helped you decide what activities took place in each room?
- 2 List five things you can do in your room.

Sometimes its hard to imagine how people lived in a historic home, especially if it is now a museum like Montauk. Luckily, we have a lot of photographs of the house.

Do you take pictures of your house or room so that you can remember it? Probably not. Usually people take photographs of the *people* who live in a house. People pictures can tell you a lot about the house that they live in, even though the house is in the background. Look at these photographs of the people who once lived at Montauk. What do they tell you about their house?



### Ask Yourself

- 1 Do you think these girls live in this house? Are they just visitors? What are the clues that would tell you?
- 2 Do you think the picture is supposed to be of the girls, the car, or the house? Why?

There are lots of other ways to discover things about a home without photographs. You can look at newspapers, letters, or diaries. You might want to interview the former owner or talk to people who have lived in the neighborhood for a long time. Ask them questions about what your house used to be like, who lived there, or how your house and the neighborhood have changed over time.

Read the following two excerpts about events at Montauk from a newspaper and see what you can find out about the house.

This is part of an article about Julia Larrabee's wedding on August 10, 1890. During this time, weddings were often held in the bride's family home, no matter how rich or poor the family was.

The grand old family home, Montauk, near Clermont, was decorated in every part with masses of beautiful flowers mostly gathered from the home lawn. Montauk Hill, on which the house stands, [has] a view of one of the finest scenes in all northeastern Iowa. . . .The grand staircase, where the bridal party descended as from a fairy land above, was decorated with [beautiful flowers] . . . The happy pair [stood] in the large bay window, which was lined with evergreens and flowers. When the last words were said . . . the window opened, and the couple was covered with roses.

### Ask Yourself

- 1 Instead of the aisle, what did the bride walk down?
- 2 Why do you think people don't get married very often at home today?