

# How do I find out when my house was built?



How can I find out the age of my house? (stock image)

Fergal McGirl

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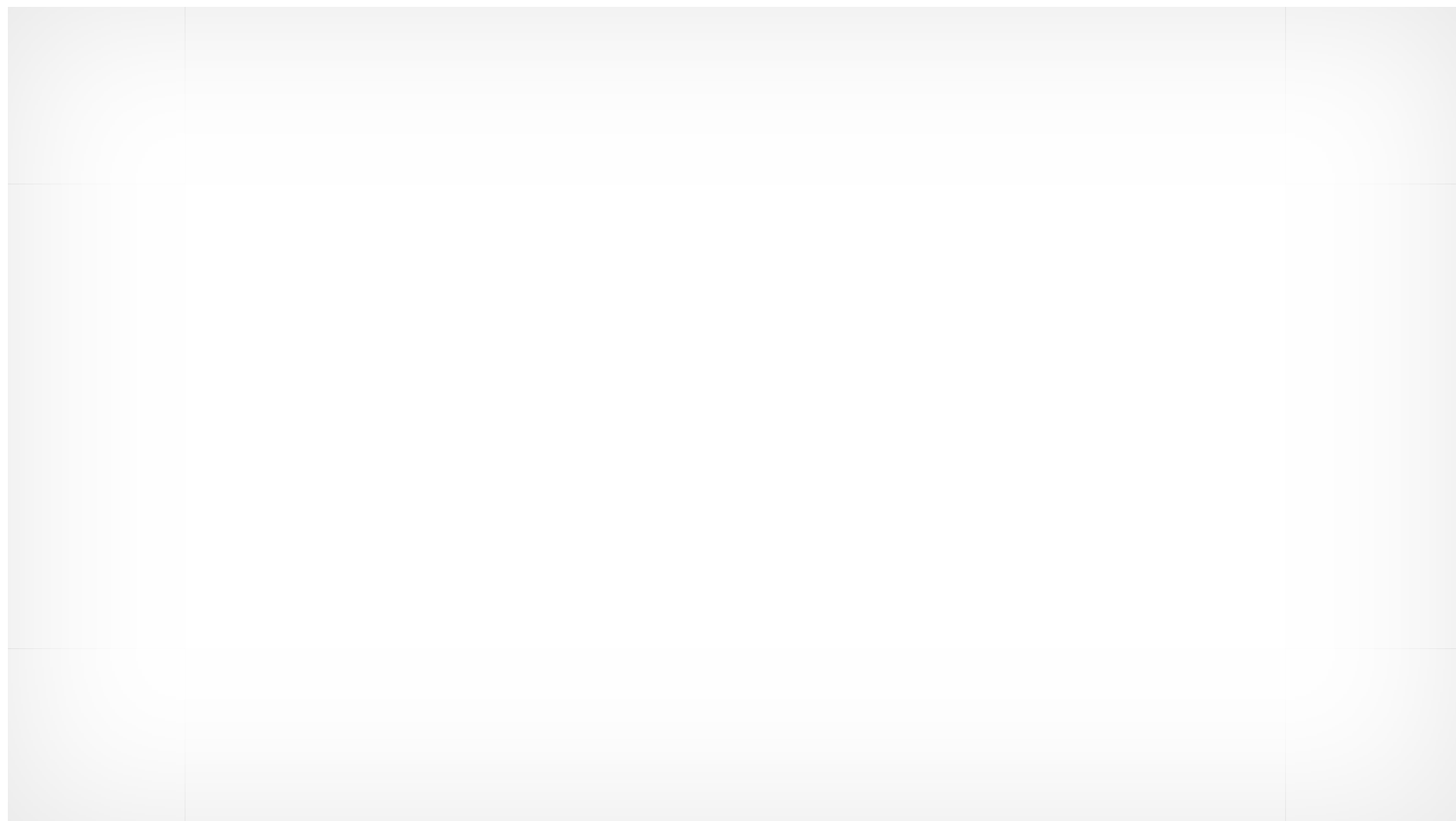
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Query: We live in an old property with some unusual architectural features but I've no idea when it was built. How can I find out the age of my house? Therese, Galway

**Answer:** The age of a building can be researched from a number of sources. Many large period properties may have been altered at different stages during different periods and, as such, the phases of development should form part of the research. The information gathered can then be cross-referenced to verify one source against another.

A map search can often yield the most immediate information in a cartographic format. Between 1829 and 1842, Ordnance Survey Ireland completed the first ever large-scale survey of an entire country. This 6in survey is available to view online at [osi.ie](http://osi.ie) as well as the more detailed, later 25in 1897-1913 survey.

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There were other localised surveys carried out at different times. Earlier maps may be available depending on the town or area such as Rocque's 1756 map of Dublin. The Glucksman Map Library in Trinity College retains a comprehensive range of historic maps for the country and can be viewed for free and copied for a small fee. The map search will reveal if the building existed at the time of survey but not necessarily the date of construction. Subsequent maps may indicate if the house was altered.

The title deeds for the property may be available from your solicitor, the Registry of Deeds in the King's Inns building, Dublin 1, or possibly online from Land Registry ([landregistry.ie](http://landregistry.ie)). The deeds can offer information on when the site was originally sold or leased, previous owners and site dimensions.

For most architects/researchers, however, the physical features of the building can give the best clues to the date of its construction. Certain features pertain to certain periods: for example, exposed shutter boxes to the external facade and corner fireplaces can indicate more rare late 17th/early 18th century construction.

Many 17th century buildings in Dublin, however, were substantially altered to later styles so often appearances can be deceptive! Georgian and later 19th century Victorian houses are usually easily distinguishable by the change in style from austere uniform Georgian elevations and plan typology to the more varied and decorative styles of the Victorian period.

Changes in window patterns, decoration and mouldings can fine-tune the date of the building. For example, earlier 17th century Georgian shutter boxes featured square shutter boxes at right angles to the window before the later splayed type that are more common.

Local libraries and archives are worth researching - there may be written histories of the area your house is built in. Thom's Directory, first published in 1844, is a street directory for Dublin and other towns in Ireland and lists the occupants and valuation of properties each year. Similarly the National Archives have an online

record of the censuses of 1901 and 1911.

Other helpful sources to consult include:

- The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage ([buildingsofireland.ie](http://buildingsofireland.ie))
- The Royal Irish Academy series of historic town atlases ([ria.ie/research-projects/irish-historic-towns-atlas](http://ria.ie/research-projects/irish-historic-towns-atlas))
- Irish Architectural Archive in Merrion Square, Dublin ([iarc.ie](http://iarc.ie))

Building is complex - work with a registered architect. You can find a registered architect on [riai.ie](http://riai.ie), the registration body for architects in Ireland.

- Fergal McGirl is a conservation architect in private practice, [fmgarchitects.ie](http://fmgarchitects.ie)

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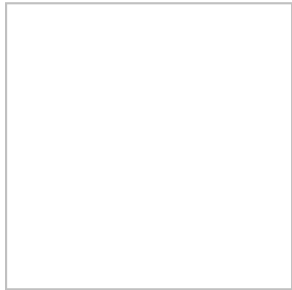
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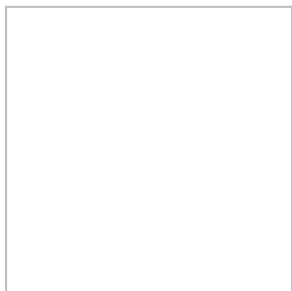
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