

# Property Tax Records

Tax Records for the City of Milwaukee (1846-1984) list:

- Ownership
- Assessment value
- Property tax

They are on microfilm ([336.2 M645](#)) in the Periodicals Department of the Central Library of Milwaukee Public Library. The Humanities Department has a Tax Rolls binder, maps and other resources to help you. Your search might involve:

- Address
- Legal description
- New and old taxkey numbers
- Organizational/Administrative assessment district
- Tax assessment district/Assessment roll book
- Aldermanic ward

Tax records are arranged in various aldermanic ward, subdivision and tax assessment district orders up to 1932. Starting in 1933, tax records are organized in various taxkey number orders.

Town of Wauwatosa tax records for 1868, 1870-74, and 1876-1900 are located in the Milwaukee Public Library City Archives. Contact the Humanities Department to access these records.

Town of Lake tax rolls for 1868-1915 are located in the City Records Center in the Municipal Building at 841 N. Broadway St., Room B-1.

For tax records of other cities, towns and villages in Milwaukee, see the *Guide to Historical Resources in Milwaukee Area Archives* ([016.977595 F953](#)).

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Revised by DL, November 2010  
Links added by SM, April 2015

## Tax Roll Worksheet

City of Milwaukee tax rolls are available for public searching at the library. The microfilmed rolls ([336.2 M645](#)) have been organized in many ways, but never by the owner's name or address. These records are not computerized and can be very time consuming to search. This worksheet will provide the searcher with the information needed to search property tax rolls back to 1846. This does not include the personal property rolls, which *are* included in the microfilm. Completing this sheet will save time for the searcher in the long run.

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Write current address here:

Pre-1930 addresses can be found in the 1930 *Wright's Milwaukee Street Guide Supplement* (Address Converter), 910.1 M662, or online at Milwaukee County Historical Society's Street Name Conversion page:

<http://www.milwaukeehistory.net/street-name-conversion/>

Write pre-1930 address (if applicable) here:

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### **New Taxkey Number and Legal Description**

Legal descriptions of property never change and include the subdivision name, block number and lot number. They are needed for tax roll searches prior to 1933. Residential, commercial and industrial buildings are indicated under the category called "Improvements," the first such value may not indicate the year the building in question was built, but rather a shed or barn. Remember that there are periodic increases in assessed values, so you may need to search several years.

**Tools:** New taxkey number and legal descriptions can be found using either:

- **property tax bills** or other legal documents,
- the **City Assessor's web page**,  
[http://itmdapps.ci.mil.wi.us/MyMHome/SearchDB2\\_prod.jsp](http://itmdapps.ci.mil.wi.us/MyMHome/SearchDB2_prod.jsp)
- **REDI microfiche atlases** at the Humanities Desk,
- the **1959 tax rolls** (which are organized by the old taxkey number, see Section 2),
- You *may* need to consult a quarter section atlas to reconstruct a legal description.

Write new taxkey number here: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Write the entire legal description here (include subdivision name, block number, and lot number):

(Note: this legal description is also used in Section 4: Aldermanic Wards, 1846-1915)

**Important Note:** Interchangeable terms on maps, index and rolls can be confusing.

- Organizational districts (1889-1950?) and administrative assessment districts (1951?-1959) are the same thing.
  - Tax assessment districts (1916-1951) and assessment roll books (1951-1959) are the same thing.
  - On a microfiche index at the Humanities Desk, tax assessment districts are called “districts” and the organizational districts are called “organizational districts.”
  - In the annual *Proceedings of the Common Council* (R352.0775 M645), tax assessment districts are called “tax assessment districts” and the organizational districts are not referred to.
  - The Tax Roll Maps at the Humanities Desk list organizational districts/administrative assessment districts and tax assessment districts/assessment roll books.
  - In the Tax Roll Index in the Tax Rolls binder at the Humanities Desk, administrative assessment districts are called “assessment district.” Tax assessment districts are called “ward.” Assessment roll books are called “ward” and “book.”
  - On microfilmed tax roll pages, administrative assessment districts are called “assessment district.” Aldermanic wards are called “ward.” Tax assessment districts are called “assessment district” and “book.” Assessment roll books are called “book.”
  - Below microfilmed tax roll pages, organizational districts are called “district.” Administrative assessment districts are called “assessment district.” Aldermanic wards are called “ward.” Tax assessment districts are called “ward.” Assessment roll books are called “ward” and “book.”
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The worksheet is organized into four sections based on how property tax records are organized.

Year house was built  
(Approximate year if unknown)

- If 1960 or after, complete Section 1.
  - If between 1933-1959, complete Sections 1 and 2.
  - If between 1916-1932, complete Sections 1 through 3.
  - If 1915 or earlier, complete Sections 1 through 4.
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## 1960 to Present

### Section 1: New Taxkey Number

The tax rolls from 1960 to the present are organized solely by new taxkey number. This is all you need to search these years.

# 1933-1959

## Section 2: Old Taxkey Number

**Tools:** The old taxkey number can be found using either:

- the **1960 tax rolls** (organized by new taxkey number, see section 1),
- *Milwaukee Property That Has Been Assigned A Key Number* (R917.7595 U58 at the Humanities Desk), organized by address. This four-volume series was written before 1944, so it will not have properties built after then.

The old taxkey number begins with a letter.

Write old taxkey number:

**Note: The 1933-1959 tax rolls are organized in various taxkey number orders.**

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## 1957-1959

The tax rolls are organized by old taxkey number. This is all you need to search these years.

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## 1956

- 1956 taxkey numbers are in numerical order within their taxkey letter range. Search the **Tax Roll Index**, p. 42-43, in the Tax Rolls binder at the Humanities Desk to find the **taxkey letter series containing the old taxkey number** you are researching.

Write the microfilm reel number and image number containing the old taxkey number letter series:

## Section 2: Old Taxkey Number (continued)

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### 1933-1955

1933 to 1955 tax rolls are organized by (a) organizational district/administrative assessment district, (b) tax assessment districts/assessment roll books and (c) old taxkey number.

- (a) 12, 12 and 15 larger administrative assessment districts consisted of 26, 27 and 29 assessment roll books in 1951-1953, 1954 and 1955, respectively.
- (b) Tax assessment districts/Assessment roll books organized neighborhoods. Although similar to aldermanic wards, they were designed not to reflect aldermanic ward boundaries. There were 26, 27 and 29 tax assessment districts/assessment roll books in 1933-1953, 1954 and 1955, respectively. Each assessment roll book had two series of taxkey numbers with each series starting with a different letter.

#### Tools

- **Tax Assessment Maps** at the Humanities Desk show administrative assessment districts and tax assessment districts/assessment roll books.
- Search the **Tax Roll Index**, p. 18-43, in the Tax Rolls binder at the Humanities Desk for the 1933-1955 tax roll microfilm image sheets index for the **tax assessment district/assessment book number and taxkey series starting with your taxkey number letter**.

	<u>Microfilm</u>	<u>District</u> <u>(Ward)/</u>	<u>Taxkey</u> <u>Series</u>		<u>Microfilm</u>	<u>District</u> <u>(Ward)/</u>	<u>Taxkey</u> <u>Series</u>
	<u>Roll</u>	<u>Book</u>	<u>Image</u>		<u>Roll</u>	<u>Book</u>	<u>Image</u>
1933	_____	_____	_____	1940	_____	_____	_____
1934	_____	_____	_____	1941	_____	_____	_____
1935	_____	_____	_____	1942	_____	_____	_____
1936	_____	_____	_____	1943	_____	_____	_____
1937	_____	_____	_____	1944	_____	_____	_____
1938	_____	_____	_____	1945	_____	_____	_____
1939	_____	_____	_____	1946	_____	_____	_____

**Section 2: Old Taxkey Number (continued)**

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	Microfilm Roll	District (Ward)/ Book	Taxkey Series Image		Microfilm Roll	District (Ward)/ Book	Taxkey Series Image
1947	_____	_____	_____	1952	_____	_____	_____
1948	_____	_____	_____	1953	_____	_____	_____
1949	_____	_____	_____	1954	_____	_____	_____
1950	_____	_____	_____	1955	_____	_____	_____
1951	_____						

- With the correct tax assessment district/assessment roll book and taxkey series image number, you should be able to find tax roll records for 1933-1955.

**Microfilm note: For Sections 2, 3 and 4, the black image number** faintly appears in the bottom right corner below each microfilmed tax roll page and **should not be confused with the white page number** that appears in the top left or right corner of every tax roll book page.

# 1916-1932

## Section 3: Tax Assessment Districts

From 1916 to 1932 the tax rolls were organized by (a) organizational district, (b) tax assessment district and (c) legal description.

**Note:** The City started introducing taxkey numbers in 1931. If a property was issued a taxkey number in 1931 or 1932, it *might* help you find it within a tax assessment district. This should be listed above in Section 2. Write down the old taxkey number here:

- (a) Organizational districts consisted of three to seven tax assessment districts. The organizational districts grew in number from four in 1916 to nine in 1931. The tax rolls are organized numerically by these districts.
- (b) Tax assessment districts organized neighborhoods. Although similar to aldermanic wards, they were designed not to reflect ward boundaries. They grew in number from 16 in 1916 to 26 in 1931. A property could change tax assessment district number several times during these years, so it is important to note the district in every year you wish to search.

### Tools

- **Tax Assessment Maps** at the Humanities Desk show organizational districts and tax assessment districts. For years not on a map, a **chart** at the Humanities Desk indicates the organizational district.
- Search the **Tax Roll Index**, p. 11-18 in the Tax Rolls binder at the Humanities Desk for the tax assessment district.
- A **microfiche index** at the Humanities Desk will show the page on which a subdivision begins. Look up the subdivision in the tax assessment district to find the starting page on the tax rolls.
- For years that the microfiche index is unavailable, the subdivisions are organized alphabetically, although many subdivisions are out of place. Check the tax assessment district carefully for your subdivision.

### Section 3: Tax Assessment Districts (continued)

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	Microfilm Roll	District (Ward)	Subdivision Page		Microfilm Roll	District (Ward)	Subdivision Page
1916	_____	_____	_____	1925	_____	_____	_____
1917	_____	_____	_____	1926	_____	_____	_____
1918	_____	_____	_____	1927	_____	_____	_____
1919	_____	_____	_____	1928	_____	_____	_____
1920	_____	_____	_____	1929	_____	_____	_____
1921	_____	_____	not available	1930	_____	_____	not available
1922	_____	_____	_____	1931	_____	_____	_____
1923	_____	_____	_____	1932	_____	_____	_____
1924	_____	_____	_____				

- With the correct tax assessment district (ward), legal description, and beginning page number for the subdivision, you should be able to find tax roll records for 1916-1932.



# 1846-1915

## Section 4: Aldermanic Wards

From the beginning of the city (1846) through 1915, the city organized tax rolls by aldermanic wards. These years can be particularly frustrating to search as the rolls were handwritten and the alphabetization of legal descriptions was often unclear. The wards changed frequently, so it is important to note the correct ward for each year you want to search. In 1889, the city began organizing the wards into organizational districts.

### Tools

- **Aldermanic Ward Maps** in the Tax Rolls binder at the Humanities Desk show wards.
- **Aldermanic Ward Maps** at the Humanities Desk indicate organizational districts.
- The **microfiche index** at the Humanities Desk begins in 1907. Using the index, you can determine the beginning page for specific subdivisions.
- Search the **Tax Roll Index**, p. 1-10, in the Tax Rolls binder at the Humanities Desk for the organizational district (started in 1889) and aldermanic ward.

	Microfilm Roll	Ald. Ward	Ald. Ward Image		Microfilm Roll	Ald. Ward	Ald. Ward Image
1846	_____	_____	_____	1855	_____	_____	_____
1847	_____	_____	_____	1856	_____	_____	_____
1848	_____	_____	_____	1857	_____	_____	_____
1849	_____	_____	_____	1858	_____	_____	_____
1850	_____	_____	_____	1859	_____	_____	_____
1851	_____	_____	_____	1860	_____	_____	_____
1852	_____	_____	_____	1861	_____	_____	_____
1853	_____	_____	_____	1862	_____	_____	_____
1854	_____	_____	_____	1863	_____	_____	_____

## Section 4: Aldermanic Wards (continued)

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	Microfilm Roll	Ald. Ward	Ald. Ward Image		Microfilm Roll	Ald. Ward	Ald. Ward Image
1864	_____	_____	_____	1883	_____	_____	_____
1865	_____	_____	_____	1884	_____	_____	_____
1866	_____	_____	_____	1885	_____	_____	_____
1867	_____	_____	_____	1886	_____	_____	_____
1868	_____	_____	_____	1887	_____	_____	_____
1869	_____	_____	_____	1888	_____	_____	_____
1870	_____	_____	_____	1889	_____	_____	_____
1871	_____	_____	_____	1890	_____	_____	_____
1872	_____	_____	_____	1891	_____	_____	_____
1873	_____	_____	_____	1892	_____	_____	_____
1874	_____	_____	_____	1893	_____	_____	_____
1875	_____	_____	_____	1894	_____	_____	_____
1876	_____	_____	_____	1895	_____	_____	_____
1877	_____	_____	_____	1896	_____	_____	_____
1878	_____	_____	_____	1897	_____	_____	_____
1879	_____	_____	_____	1898	_____	_____	_____
1880	_____	_____	_____	1899	_____	_____	_____
1881	_____	_____	_____	1900	_____	_____	_____
1882	_____	_____	_____	1901	_____	_____	_____

**Section 4: Aldermanic Wards (continued)**

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	<u>Microfilm Roll</u>	<u>Ald. Ward</u>	<u>Ald. Ward Image</u>		<u>Microfilm Roll</u>	<u>Ald. Ward</u>	<u>Ald. Ward Image</u>
1902	_____	_____	_____	1905	_____	_____	_____
1903	_____	_____	_____	1906	_____	_____	_____
1904	_____	_____	_____				

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	<u>Microfilm Roll</u>	<u>Ald. Ward</u>	<u>Ald. Ward Image</u>	<u>Subdivision Page</u>
1907	_____	_____	_____	_____
1908	_____	_____	_____	_____
1909	_____	_____	_____	_____
1910	_____	_____	_____	not available
1911	_____	_____	_____	_____
1912	_____	_____	_____	_____
1913	_____	_____	_____	_____
1914	_____	_____	_____	not available
1915	_____	_____	_____	_____

- With the correct ward, legal description and beginning page number for the subdivision (1907-1915), you should have everything needed to find tax roll information for 1846-1915.
- For 1846-1906 and for years where the microfiche index is missing, subdivisions are listed alphabetically in each ward. **However**, the alphabetization is extremely erratic; check the ward carefully.