



HOUSE HISTORY RESEARCH Major Resources by Department

Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room

Fire Insurance Atlases (Sanborn Atlases)

Fire insurance atlases show a footprint or outline of buildings. They are drawn to scale and indicate additions, porches, garages, number of floors & whether the building is a dwelling or a commercial establishment. The buildings are color coded to represent construction material (brick, wood frame, stone or adobe). A "snapshot" of the neighborhood is provided. Because the library has several different years of these atlases, the size of houses and other buildings can be compared over time.

1876 Milwaukee County Plat Book and Baist Atlas

They show ownership of land and include some drawings of property.

Premises Records

Premises records are available for some Milwaukee properties (residences, taverns, night clubs, restaurants and churches) and include building permits and code enforcement records from building inspections. There are some photographs taken by the Milwaukee Dept. of Building Inspection of buildings to be razed (i.e. a shed, cottage, garage) in the 1950s, 60s and 70s or involved in an enforcement action.

Historical Photos

They can show how a house or street originally looked. Photographs are indexed by street. While there might not be a photo of your particular house in the file, there could be a photograph of other houses on the street or a neighboring house that could include part of your house.

Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room (continued)

Milwaukee City Directories

The directory collection dates back to 1847. They are useful for tracing the occupancy of a house. The directories list head of household, place of residence and occupation (sometimes the employer is listed). Wives, roomers, and renters were included in later editions. Up until 1920, the directories were an alphabetical list of names of individuals and businesses. In 1921 a reverse directory was started where you can look up an address to see who lived there.

1930 Address Converter

In 1930, the street address numbers and some street names in Milwaukee were changed to create a more logical system. The 1930 Milwaukee City Directory includes a supplement with an easy-to-use address converter.

Wisdex: Wisconsin Biography Index

This loose-leaf binder index includes citations for over 90,000 names in over 250 sources in one alphabetical arrangement.

Art Music & Recreation (AMR)

Wisconsin Architectural Archives

The WAA was founded in 1975 and includes over 10,500 architectural drawings (**primarily for older high-style houses**) – as well as architectural renderings, photographs, specifications, shop drawings, and biographical data on architects who have worked in Wisconsin. More than 470 architects are represented from firms dating from 1851 to the present. The holdings are indexed by architect's name, building name, owner's name, and street address.

To find out if a property is included in the collection, visit or call the Art, Music & Recreation Department at **(414) 286-3071** or send an e-mail message through Ask Away, the library's online reference service. If material is available, an appointment can be scheduled to view it.

Milwaukee Architecture Street Address Index to Books

Approximately 60 books on Milwaukee architecture (including books on tours of various neighborhoods) have been indexed by address. You might find a brief paragraph or photo of your house in one of these books. Ask the librarian to check individual addresses for you.

Milwaukee Architecture Street Address Index to Clippings

If an article on an architecturally significant house or other type of building appeared in a local newspaper, it might be included in the library's Architecture Clipping File. Ask the librarian to check the address for you.

Periodicals

City of Milwaukee tax rolls are available on microfilm in the Periodicals Dept. There is a Tax Roll Worksheet available in the Humanities Dept. to assist you in using the tax rolls. They are useful for determining the date of construction, dates of major improvements (additions) to property and establishing a chain of ownership of the property.

The **Milwaukee Sentinel Index 1837-1890** card file is useful for finding newspaper article citations for information related to house occupants, their ancestors, street name information.

Online Resources

Web sites

Wisconsin Historical Society Architecture and History Inventory

<http://preview.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:1189>

This is a search engine that provides historical & architectural information on approximately 120,000 properties in Wisconsin. Select a county, then a city and type in the numeric part of address. Check to see if your address appears. It will show construction date, style, sometimes a designer or an historic name. Occasionally, the entry will include "View additional comments" where you will find extra reports or data from someone who has already researched the property.

Wisconsin Historical Society Wisconsin Local History and Biography Articles Collection

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:4294963828-4294963805&dsRecordDetails=R:CS3503>

Provides access to historical and biographical articles on Wisconsin people and communities preserved in scrapbooks at the WHS from 1860 – 1940.

Milwaukee's Historic Preservation Commission

<http://city.milwaukee.gov/hpc/Research>

The HPC's research webpage provides information on house history resources that are available at various locations in the city, including the library, the Milwaukee County Historical Society, the Milwaukee County Courthouse, and other municipal buildings.

Property assessments in Milwaukee

http://itmdapps.milwaukee.gov/MyMHome/SearchDB2_prod.jsp

Found on the City of Milwaukee's Web site, these property assessments list year of construction, legal description, current owner(s) value of land and improvements (buildings).

(Web sites continued)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Historic Archives

<http://www.jsonline.com/historicarchive/>

A great source for historic editions of the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Milwaukee Sentinel*, with articles from 1884 to 2007.

Databases Available from the MPL Web Site

All of the databases listed below can be found on the Milwaukee Public Library Web site at <http://www.mpl.org/databases/all/>

19th Century Newspapers

Consisting almost 17 million articles, **19th Century U. S. Newspapers** is a genealogy or history buff's dream come true. Fully searchable by keyword, this database includes papers from across the U.S., and is particularly strong on the Midwest. Newspapers with significant runs include the *Milwaukee Journal*, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, *Wisconsin State Register*, and more.

HeritageQuest Database (Available through remote access) &

Ancestry Library Edition Database (Available only within the library).

These databases contain census records that are available starting in 1930 and working backwards every 10 years. Census records show the names of every person living at the address along with their age and relationship (i.e. daughter, roomer, or servant). Some records also may include country of birth and country of birth of the parents.

PropertyLink(SM) Library Edition is a subscription database available for use within City of Milwaukee libraries and by remote access to City of Milwaukee cardholders. The database contains over 2 million real property records for the last 6 years, including commercial, residential and vacant land data from many of Wisconsin's 72 counties. Search access points vary depending upon how a county assessor collects assessment information. Reported data may include year built, legal description, property assessment and tax values and sales histories.