MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

HOUSE HISTORY RESEARCH RESOURCE LIST

Frank P. Zeidler 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.

Plat Books and Atlases

They show ownership of land and may include some property illustrations.

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 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.

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.

The WAA index is available online through the library's website. Plans are viewed by appointment, so please call (414) 286-3000 or email mplarchives@milwaukee.gov to schedule one.

Milwaukee Architecture Index
Arranged by address, this index compiles over 3000 citations from newspaper clippings files and more than 70 books about local buildings and architecture.

Periodicals Department

City of Milwaukee tax rolls are available on microfilm in the Periodicals Dept. There is a Tax Roll Worksheet available in the Zeidler Room to assist you in using the tax rolls. They are useful for determining the date of construction, dates of major improvements or additions to a 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 Preserve Your Homes and Properties
https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS15309
This collection provides historical & architectural information on approximately 140,000 properties in Wisconsin. 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
https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/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
https://itmdapps.milwaukee.gov/MyMHome/index.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).

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 U.S. Newspapers (Available remotely with a City of Milwaukee library card.)
Consisting of 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.

Ancestry Institutional Edition Database (Available only within the library.) &
HeritageQuest Database (Available remotely.)
These databases contain census records that are available starting in 1940 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.

NewsBank (Available remotely with a City of Milwaukee library card.)
Provides access to *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* articles from 1990 to the present.

PropertyLink(SM) Library Edition (Available remotely with a City of Milwaukee library card.) 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.