

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT
325 Superior Avenue, N.E., Cleveland, Ohio, 44114
(216) 623-2864 • www.cpl.org
Monday-Saturday, 9-6 - Sunday 1-5 (Sept-May)
Revised September 2003

A CHECKLIST FOR PROPERTY RESEARCH IN CLEVELAND & CUYAHOGA COUNTY

This guide outlines resources available for conducting research on properties in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. Many of these resources require the assistance of a staff person, so please ask questions of the staff in the various agencies listed. Although the Library is listed first, you may start your research at any of the institutions in this guide without duplicating your work. Throughout the course of your research, you will find it very helpful to keep a written log of every piece of information you find and where you find it.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY DEPT. (Louis Stokes Wing, 6th Fl.)

(216) 623-2864
history@cpl.org

- **Cleveland City Directories (1837-1980).** An alphabetic listing of residents, businesses, public buildings, schools, societies, etc. for Cleveland and some suburbs. Entries for residences include name, occupation, and other information. Business listings vary, but sometimes include incorporation date, officers, etc. Starting with the 1929 Cleveland directory, properties are listed *by address* at the end of each volume, enabling the researcher to quickly determine the occupant(s) of a property. Check each volume to determine geographic coverage.

The History & Geography Department maintains the following directories in paper copy:

Cleveland City Directory, 1936-1977*
Cleveland: East Suburban City Directories, 1964-1979*
Cleveland: West Suburban City Directories, 1964-1980*

*Microform Center has a complete set of directories (1837-1980) on microfilm. Photocopies can be made *only from the microfilm*.

- **Haine's Criss-Cross Directory (1960 to last year).** A listing, *by address*, of residences and businesses in the Cleveland area. Information varies, but basically includes name, address and telephone number. History & Geography's set of criss-cross directories covers 1960 to last year, but also includes two early directories from 1923 and 1926. The Business, Economics & Labor Department houses the current year's criss-cross directory.
- **Newspaper Clipping Files: Cleveland and Ohio (1920s-1975).** Articles on all aspects of Cleveland and Ohio history, including files on well-known houses and buildings. (On microfiche.)
- **Index to Cleveland and Ohio Regional History & Biography (1900s-1975).** An index to a variety of sources (books, magazines, etc.) on all aspects of Cleveland and Ohio history and biography. (On microfiche.)
- **Biography Clipping File: Cleveland and Ohio (1920s-1975).** Articles on *prominent* Clevelanders. (On microfiche.)
- **Cleveland News Index (1975 to date).** An index to Cleveland newspapers. Available only in paper copy in the History & Geography Department for 1975-1982. Available only as an online database, 1983 to date.
- **Annals of Cleveland (1818-1876, 1933-1938).** An index to Cleveland newspapers, the *Annals* can be searched by building name, architect name or any other pertinent piece of information.
- **Old & New Street Numbers book (Ref F499.C675 O42 1905x).** In 1905/1906, most street names and all street address numbers were changed according to a standardized street naming and numbering plan. Use this book if: 1.) You have a pre-1906 address of a house/building and want to know what it was changed to in 1906, or 2.) You need to determine the pre-1906 address of a house/building. (Note: this resource is also available on microfilm in the Microfilm Center.)

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
MAP COLLECTION (Louis Stokes Wing, 6th Fl.)

(216) 623-2880
maps@cpl.org

- **Hopkins Plat Maps (1912-1957).** Plat maps can help to date a building and to provide information about property allotments, allotment numbers, shapes of structures, property dimensions and sometimes ownership. Map Collection owns city books, 1912-1938; county books, 1914-1957.
- **Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (1886-1973).** Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps can help to date a building and to provide information about changes to a property, such as porch additions or removals. Sanborn maps also show building material (brick, stone, or wood frame), number of stories, and other details about the structure. Map Collection owns original paper copies of Sanborn Insurance Maps from 1886 (corrected to 1894) to 1919 (corrected through 1941) and an extensive microfilm collection of maps covering Cleveland, Cuyahoga County and *cities and counties throughout the State of Ohio* dating from 1886 to 1973.
- **Real Estate Atlas of Cuyahoga County (1978) (Ref HD268.C6 R421x).** This resource includes all of the tax maps, as well as the title sheets, for Cuyahoga County as they appeared in 1978. The title sheets can be used to determine property ownership in 1978 and dating back one or two changes in ownership. (The title sheets are photocopies of the title sheets in the Map Room of the County Auditor's Office.) If you wish to do ownership research before and after this book's coverage, you will need to view the records at the County Auditor's Office. See the County Auditor's section below for more information.
- **Realty Atlas Tax Maps (1994 to date) (Ref G1398.C9 R42x).** These tax maps for Cuyahoga County can be used to determine permanent parcel number (PPN) for residential and commercial property. The PPNs for residential property can be cross-referenced to current ownership records in the Business, Economics and Labor Department (BEL). See BEL's section below for more information.
- **Atlases & Maps of Cleveland & Cuyahoga County.** The Map Collection houses an extensive collection of maps, including land ownership maps, of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County dating back to the 1790s. Consult the Map Collection staff to see if any of these would be helpful to you.
- **Aerial Photographs.** Map Collection owns a complete set of aerial photographs for Cuyahoga County (1978 and high altitude, 1989-1991) and City of Cleveland (1991).

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION (Louis Stokes Wing, 4th Fl.)

(216) 623-2871
photos@cpl.org

- **Photographs.** The Photograph Collection houses approximately 100,000 photographs of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County subjects, from a variety of sources. Recent additions include the Cleveland Board of Zoning Appeals photographs, which date to 1929, and Cleveland Urban Renewal photographs from the 1960s-70s.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
BUSINESS, ECONOMICS & LABOR DEPT. (Louis Stokes Wing, 2nd Fl.)

(216) 623-2827
business@cpl.org

- **Real Estate Solutions Residential Property Information (current) (Ref HD268.C6 R42x).** This microfiche resource, updated regularly with print supplements, can be used to determine information such as a physical description of the subject property, purchase price, previous purchase price, tax valuation, lot size, etc. It is searchable by permanent parcel number, owner's name and address.
- **Haine's Criss-Cross Directory (current year only).** See History & Geography Dept. for older volumes.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
MICROFORM CENTER (Main Bldg., 1st Fl.)

(216) 623-2910
microform.center@cpl.org

- **Ohio Census records (1820-1930 & indexes).** Searchable by head of household to determine who was living in a house & information about members of a household. (See ELECTRONIC RESOURCES section for information about electronic access.)
- **Cleveland Telephone Directories (1880 to date).** Includes all available residential (White Pages) and business (Yellow Pages) directories.
- **Cleveland City Directories (1837-1980).** [See History & Geography Department for description.]

Microform Center owns the following Cleveland city directories on microfilm:

Cleveland City Directories, 1837-1977

Cleveland: East Suburban City Directories, 1964-1979

Cleveland: West Suburban City Directories, 1964-1980

Suburban city directories for:

Bay Village (1939-1950); Bedford (1924-1963); Berea (1948-1963); Chagrin Valley (1973-1974); Cleveland Heights, including East Cleveland, Shaker Heights, South Euclid, University Heights (1949-1963); Fairview Park, including North Olmsted, Parkview, Westlake (1953); Garfield Heights (1954-1962); Euclid (1942-1963); Lakewood (1949-1963); Lyndhurst (1952-1955); Parma (1941-1963); Rocky River (1954-1955)

- **Cleveland City Council: Council Proceedings, 1873-1913*. The City Record, 1914 to date.** The official record of Cleveland City Council, this publication describes the overall physical improvements done throughout the city, including streets, sidewalks, lighting, etc.

*Note: council proceedings for 1836-1872 are available only in the Public Administration Library at City Hall. See separate description of the Public Administration Library in this brochure.

- **Ohio City. Office of the Recorder: Assessments, 1838-1848 (Available on Reel 600 [item #35] of the Cleveland Documents Microfilm Project).** Provides the names of Ohio City residents and their addresses for 1838-1848. Original volumes are in the collection of the Public Administration Library.
- **Ohio City Council: Minutes, 1837-1854 (Available on Reel 4 [item #38] of the Cleveland Documents Microfilm Project).** The official record of the City Council of Ohio City. Includes city ordinances and resolutions, tax duplicate and journal. Original volumes are in the collection of the Public Administration Library.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
FINE ARTS & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPT. (Main Bldg., 3rd Floor)

(216) 623-2848
fine.arts@cpl.org

The Fine Arts Department maintains an extensive architecture collection, comprised of books, periodicals, vertical files and architectural plans. The following are key resources for local architecture research:

- **Oviatt Architecture Index.** An index to the *Ohio Architect and Builder*, 1903 to 1918. A valuable source of information for important buildings constructed during this period.
- **Architectural plans.** The Department has architectural plans for a small number of local buildings, including extensive coverage of the work of local architect Clarence Mack.
- **Newspaper Clipping Files: Art & Architecture.** Dating to the 1920s, this file includes clippings and other publications related to art and architecture in Cleveland.
- **Index to Cleveland Art and Architecture.** Dating to the 1920s, this card-file index, arranged alphabetically by subject, includes references to a wide variety of sources.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY**CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY ARCHIVES (Louis Stokes Wing, 10th Fl.)****(216) 623-2936****planning@cpl.org**

The Cleveland Public Library Archives is a part of the Library's Planning & Research Department, a non-public department that supports the work of the Library's administration. The Archives houses all existing records (including approximately 1,000 boxes of correspondence and more than 20,000 photographs) documenting all aspects of the operation of the Cleveland Public Library back to its founding in 1869.

The Archives features an extensive collection of architectural plans, photographs, postcards, slides, architect correspondence, administrative reports, annual reports, Library board minutes, etc., relating to **every building ever built, owned or rented** by the Cleveland Public Library, back to 1869-- including storefront rentals.

Note: The Archives *does not* house records relating to any buildings other than those occupied by the Cleveland Public Library. The Archives is staffed on a part-time basis; public access is **by appointment only**. Please call or e-mail the department if you are conducting research on a current or former Library building.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY – PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LIBRARY**(Located in Cleveland City Hall – Room 100)
601 LAKESIDE AVENUE, CLEVELAND, 44114****(216) 623-2919****publicadmin@cpl.org**

- **Cleveland City Council: The City Record, 1836-1872. Council Proceedings, 1873-1913. The City Record, 1914 to date.** The official record of Cleveland City Council, this publication dating to 1836 describes the overall physical improvements done throughout the city, including streets, sidewalks, lighting, etc. (Some years available only on microfilm.)
- **Ohio City. Office of the Recorder: Assessments, 1838-1848 (Available on Reel 600 [item #35] of the Cleveland Documents Microfilm Project).** Provides the names of Ohio City residents and their addresses. Public Administration Library also owns the original volumes.
- **Ohio City Council: Minutes, 1837-1854 (Available on Reel 4 [item #38] of the Cleveland Documents Microfilm Project).** The official record of the City Council of Ohio City. Includes city ordinances and resolutions, tax duplicate and journal. Public Administration Library also owns the original volumes.
- **Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1886, 1887, 1896, 1903.** On microfilm. All are *uncorrected* versions. See description in Map Collection section.
- **Old & New Street Numbers book (Ref F499.C675 O42 1905x).** See description in History & Geography Department section.

CLEVELAND CITY HALL, LANDMARKS COMMISSION**601 LAKESIDE AVENUE, ROOM 519, CLEVELAND, 44114
Robert Keiser, Secretary (rkeiser@city.cleveland.oh.us)****(216) 664-2531**

Property research records at Cleveland City Hall pertain only to buildings in the city of Cleveland. Records for buildings built in areas that were later annexed to the city of Cleveland may not be recorded here. If you are researching a building outside the city of Cleveland, consult your local city hall for similar information and records.

- **Cleveland Landmarks Commission files.** Information about Cleveland landmark buildings, sites and historic districts.
- **Ohio Historic Inventory Forms.** The Commission maintains an information sheet for many Cleveland buildings deemed of historic importance, mostly commercial or public buildings.

- **National Register forms.** The Commission maintains an information sheet for each Cleveland building submitted for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Architect/Project index.** An alphabetic list of architects and their projects in Cleveland, compiled by the Landmarks Commission. Includes a biographical profile of each architect.

CLEVELAND CITY HALL, DEPT. OF BUILDING & HOUSING (216) 664-4355
RECORDS ROOM – (Room 517)
601 LAKESIDE AVENUE, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44114

- **Building Permits.** Building permits provide pertinent information dealing with the building or alteration of Cleveland structures, after 1888, including the dimensions of the structure, location, estimated cost of construction, the architect, the builder, the owner and the purpose of the building or alteration. The “Index of Building Permits” is a set of red books prepared in the 1930s by Works Progress Administration (WPA) staff. This index gives the permit numbers, location and a very brief description of every permit issued before the 1930s. The index is arranged alphabetically by street name.
- **Demolition Permits.** Demolition permits dating to the late 1800s for buildings demolished in Cleveland.

CLEVELAND CITY ARCHIVES (216) 664-3054
1230 EAST 6th STREET (MUSIC HALL STAGE DOOR)
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44114
Martin Hauserman, Archivist (mhauserman@clevelandcitycouncil.org)

- **Blueprint Collection.** The Archives houses more than 12,500 sets of blueprints for public and commercial buildings (office buildings, churches, apartment houses, etc.) and a small number of houses, dating to the early 1900s. **Access to the collection is by appointment only.** Call ahead to schedule an appointment.

CITY OF CLEVELAND, DEPT. OF PUBLIC UTILITIES (216) 664-2586
1201 LAKESIDE AVENUE, 2ND FLOOR (SALES PERMIT DEPARTMENT)
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44114

- **Public Utilities Records.** Utilities installation information for houses in Cuyahoga County from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Besides recording information such as the number of baths and water closets found in every house, some individual files disclose the number of rooms listed in different structures at the time of installation, metering, etc.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY AUDITOR’S OFFICE – MAP ROOM (Room 310) (216) 443-7000
CUYAHOGA COUNTY RECORDER’S OFFICE (Room 216) (216) 443-7318
CUYAHOGA COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
1219 ONTARIO AVENUE, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44113

County records enable the researcher to determine ownership, terms of sale and other details about a property. The **three basic steps** involved in county records research are as follows:

- 1.) Determine address and permanent parcel number to be searched.

- 2.) Make a complete list of the names of previous owners and the dates of property transfer using the map record books in the County Auditor's Office Map Room (Room 310). Records date to the early 1800s. The earliest books are available in the Map Room on microfiche only. The original volumes are available at the Cuyahoga County Archives.
- 3.) Take the information gathered in step #2 to the County Recorder's Office (Room 216) to view the actual property deeds that were signed and filed each time the subject property changed ownership. Property deeds will give you the allotment transfer price, the fully signed terms agreed upon by the old (grantor) and new (grantee) owner(s), the dimensions of the property sold and any unusual legal stipulations considered part of the property transfer. The deed records make no reference to buildings on the property sites involved. However, the transfer price frequently hints as to the value of a structure located on a particular piece of property at a given period in time.

Note: The County's current records, as well as many of its older holdings, are gradually being made available on the Internet. See the ELECTRONIC RESOURCES section at the end of this brochure for more information.

A **detailed description of property research through county records** is available on the Cuyahoga County website: http://www.cuyahoga.oh.us/cs/archives_2.htm

PERMANENT PARCEL NUMBERS

The permanent parcel number (PPN) is a number assigned to each piece of property in the county. It is composed of three parts: a map book (tax district) number, a map book page (section) number and an assessor's parcel number. For example: 001-02-03 would be in tax district 1, section 2, property number 3. These numbers correspond to the books in Map Room of the Cuyahoga County Auditor's Office and do not change.

You may obtain the permanent parcel number from several sources, including a deed, tax bill or reappraisal notice. The staff in the Cuyahoga County Auditor's Map Room (Room 310) can help you find the number. If the property in question is a residence, you may also look up the number by address or name of property owner in the County Auditor's website: <http://auditor.cuyahoga.oh.us/auditor/propinfo/Default.asp>.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY ARCHIVES

(216) 443-7250

2905 FRANKLIN AVENUE, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44113

- **Auditor's Maps, ca. 1860-1950.** The Archives owns the original copies of the County Auditor's land ownership maps (also available on microfiche at the County Auditor's Office). Auditor's Maps document land ownership and dates of title transfer. See Cuyahoga County Auditor's Section for more information.
- **County Property Cards.** Two surveys of all tax-assessed properties in Cuyahoga County were done by the Cuyahoga County Auditor's Office in the 1930s and the 1960s. The more recent survey cards include a small photograph of the subject property. Both surveys provide information on building dimensions and layout, lighting, plumbing, property owner, rental income, roofing, tiling, estimate construction date and the assessed value of the property. An address and permanent parcel number (see section on Cuyahoga County Recorder's Office) are needed to request these cards.
- **Cuyahoga County Auditor's Tax Records (tax duplicates) & Cuyahoga County Treasurer's Tax Records, 1820-1870 (incomplete), 1870 and after.** Tax duplicates are tax records issued one or twice a year depending on the year in question. These bound volumes offer information concerning individual property ownership and property value. Divisions in tax books were made according to owner, allotment, allotment number, ward or township depending on the year, county or township involved. The Treasurer's records also indicate the amount of real estate tax paid and the date of payment.

- **Cleveland City Directories, 1837-1967.** See description in Cleveland Public Library, History Dept. section.
- **Hopkins Plat Maps (various dates).** See description in Cleveland Public Library, Map Collection section.
- **Biography Clipping File: Cleveland and Ohio (1920s-1975).** Articles on *prominent* Clevelanders. This is the original paper file from the Cleveland Public Library, which has this resource on microfiche cards.

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

(216) 687-2449

<http://web.ulib.csuohio.edu/SpecColl/>

2121 EUCLID AVENUE, CLEVELAND, OH 44115

William Barrow, Librarian (w.barrow@csuohio.edu)

- **The Cleveland Press Collection (1920s-1982).** Approximately one million newspaper clippings and half a million photographs, documenting Cleveland, Ohio and world events, arranged alphabetically by name or subject.
- **The Cleveland Union Terminal Collection.** Contains the construction records, maps and photographs chronicling the construction of the Terminal Tower complex in the 1920s. Includes information on the hundreds of buildings and houses demolished to assemble land for the project.

WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY
10825 EAST BOULEVARD, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44106

(216) 721-5722

www.wrhs.org

The Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS), a fee-based private library, maintains the largest collection of local history documents available in Cuyahoga County. WRHS's online catalog of holdings is available through its website. Records of particular interest to those doing property research include:

- **Aerial photographs, covering Cleveland and northeast Ohio, 1925-1975.**
- **Architectural plans for various buildings in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, including the Walker and Weeks Collection.**
- **Cleveland City directories & other directories.**
- **Hopkins Plat Maps, 1912-1914**
- **Manuscript collections for prominent Cleveland families.**
- **Photographs of all aspects of Cleveland neighborhoods, Cuyahoga County and Ohio.**
- **Sanborn Insurance maps, 1874-1920s.**
- **Tax records (tax duplicates), 1819-1869.** See description in the Cuyahoga County Archives section.
- **Various maps of the city of Cleveland.**

CLEVELAND STREET NAMES AND NUMBERS

In 1905/1906, most street names and all street address numbers were changed according to a standardized street naming and numbering plan. See the History & Geography Dept. at the beginning of this guide for information on how to determine old and new street names and address numbers for the 1905/06 changes.

Several address changes occurred in the 19th century as well. Note also that many buildings, especially commercial buildings, have more than one address number. The address on a building may not be the address under which the original construction permit was applied for. It sometimes helps to check a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for the entire range of a building's addresses, including the side street addresses of corner buildings.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

RESEARCH DATABASES AVAILABLE THROUGH CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY'S WEBSITE (www.cpl.org)

Ancestry Plus (available only in a CPL or CLEVNET library)
U.S. Census images 1790-1930.

Cleveland News Index (1983 to date)
An index to Cleveland newspapers and periodicals. See online description for exact coverage.

HeritageQuest Online (available remotely to CPL cardholders)
U.S. Census Images 1790-1930. Features improved indexing and easy-to-navigate images.

Plain Dealer (1991 to date) (available remotely to CLEVNET cardholders)
Full-text access to the Plain Dealer.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Ohio (available remotely to CLEVNET cardholders)
Detailed maps at building level for more than 400 Ohio communities from 1868 to the 1960s.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH THE INTERNET

Cleveland Landmarks Register <http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/landmrk/landlist.htm>
A comprehensive list of Cleveland historic districts and landmarks, as designated by the City of Cleveland.

Cleveland Restoration Society www.clevelandrestoration.org
Offers a variety of resources and programs for owners of historic properties in the Cleveland area.

**Cuyahoga County Auditor's Office &
Cuyahoga County Recorder's Office** <http://www.cuyahoga.oh.us/home/default.asp>
County Auditor search includes current ownership information (can be searched by address, price, etc.) County Recorder search includes records of deed transfer dating to the 1960s (older records added continuously).

**Historic American Buildings Survey &
Historic American Engineering Record** <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/hhhtml/hhhome.html>
These collections document achievements in architecture, engineering and design in the United States and its territories. Includes digitized images of more than 350,000 measured drawings, photographs and histories for more than 35,000 historic structures and sites throughout the United States. Continuously expanded and updated.

National Register of Historic Places <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr>
Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture.

Old House Web www.oldhouseweb.com
A variety of information resources for owners of older houses.

State Of Ohio Historic Preservation Office <http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/histpres/>
Founded 1967, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office is the official historic preservation agency of the State of Ohio.

BOOKS

Light, Sally. *House histories: a guide to tracing the genealogy of your home* (Spencertown, N.Y.: Golden Hill Press, 1989)

Miggins, Edward M., editor, *A guide to studying neighborhoods and resources on Cleveland* (Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Public Library, 1984)