# Researching the History of Your House
# A Guide to Local & Virtual Resources

Usually there is no single place or document which will tell you exactly when your house was built. In most cases, finding the date of construction involves researching a variety of local records. After locating and reviewing these records, you may be able to identify the year in which your house was built.

There are several sources of information that may help you investigate the history of a site, including, but are not limited to: the property abstract, civic records, newspapers, family records, photographs, local residents, maps, and the style of architecture.

## Your Own Records - Property Abstract

The *property abstract* is the first place to look for clues to the date of your house. This document is a chain of title that is usually prepared by a professional abstractor when a property changes hands. It is kept either by the property owner or the mortgage holder. Included in the abstract are references to deeds, mortgages, wills, probate records, court litigation, tax sales and other legal proceedings that have affected the property ownership. It shows who owned the property in the past, for how long, and how much they paid for it. Occasionally an abstract will describe buildings on the property. A sizeable increase in price from two consecutive sales usually indicates improvements or an addition. Variations in tax assessments may also mean improvements. However, inflation affects property values, so you will also need to be aware of economic history to properly interpret these clues. A good place to start may be a home buying website, such as Zillow.com or Trulia.com, which often have records of purchases and tax assessments. This information should always be confirmed with another source.
https://www.hunker.com/13410929/how-to-find-an-abstract-for-my-house

## Land Records

To research land records, first you'll need to know the owner's name and the date the property was transferred. If the owner isn't accessible, then see the City Clerk. Take with you a precise description of the property's location (township, range, street address, etc.). Tax records for the property should provide you with the information you need. The records may also indicate an estimated date the structure was built or the style of architecture. The Roseville City Clerk's Office has land files for all Roseville properties. You can call the office at (586) 445-5443 or email at cityclerk@roseville-mi.gov.
You may also access the Roseville Accessing portal, to search recent property information, which can give you some ownership records and other details.
https://bsaonline.com/?uid=327

Once you have the owner's name and date the property was acquired, go to the Macomb County Register of Deeds:

Macomb County Clerk/Register of Deeds
120 N. Main Street, Mt. Clemens 48043
registerofdeeds@macombgov.org
586-469-7953
https://www.macombgov.org/departments/clerk-register-deeds/register-deeds

The Register of Deeds office maintains the land records for Macomb County. Here you will find deed records, mortgage records, and subdivision plats. If you do not have access to a copy of the title abstract, or if you wish to investigate items in the abstract of the original records, use the grantor/grantee (*seller/buyer*) indexes to trace the changes of ownership of the property back through the years. You may also trace your property through the mortgage indexes. If you have your abstract, take it with you for reference. If you do not have your abstract, be sure to have your legal description, including the lot number.

### City Directories

We have city & county directories for 1955, 1957, 1959-60, 1975-75, 2009-2010, 2011. You are seeking other years, please check the library catalog for items at other libraries. Eastpointe Public Library has city directories for 1942, 1949, 1954-55, 1957-58. Mount Clemens Public Library has city directories for 1942, 1946, 1949, 1951, 1954-55, and 1957. City directories may indicate who lived at a particular address and their occupation the time of publication. These are reference materials and cannot be checked out.

### Newspapers

If your deed research has given you the approximate date of an earlier owner's death, you might be able to find an obituary in an old newspaper. Look for information about fires; was the house damaged, destroyed and rebuilt? Newspapers also report social events such as weddings, teas, or funerals which took place in the house. The Roseville Record which was published from 1926 to 1931 is available online via the Local History Digital Collection – Montage through the Library's website. Mount Clemens Public Library has many incarnations of the Macomb Daily on microfilm as well as other area newspapers. You can contact them via the Mount Clemens Public Library website to request searches of their ***Macomb County Obituary Index***.

### Census Records

United States censuses are taken every ten years to collect information about people who live in the U.S. In these entries you will find names of every person in the household as well as other information about them. Census records have a 72-year restriction on access, so currently only census records from 1850 to 1950 are publicly available. The 1960 Census records will become available in April 2032. The National Archives maintains the records and they can be searched online through a variety of sources.

Online Census Resources

Family Search (partner of the National Archives)

https://www.familysearch.org/search/

Ancestry.com Library Edition (only accessible at the Library)

https://rosevillelibrary.org/services/digital-resources/

MyHeritage.com Library Edition (Accessible at the Library and Remotely accessible via MelL.org eResources [*use your Driver's License or Library Card to log in*])

http://widgets.ebscohost.com/prod/customerspecific/mel/auth.php?database=myheritage

### Family Records and Photos

The Roseville Public Library Archives does not hold information about residential homes beyond an architectural survey completed in the 1990s (address and picture of home). We suggest that you talk with neighbors and long-time residents of Roseville who may be able to provide you with helpful information about your house or previous owners. Make notes about what you find out and the name of each resource person.

## Maps

Plat maps should be on file at the Land Files Office in the Macomb County Building. Some old maps include the names of individual lot holders as well as indicating the placement of stores, factories, and natural features. Check county atlases, U.S. Geological Survey maps, and Sanborn (Fire Insurance) maps. Map collections are also found in local and university libraries, the Detroit Public Library, and the State Archives in Lansing.

Online Map Resources

*Michigan County Histories and Atlases*
http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micounty
*Manual for ACCELA Citizen Access (ACA) Plat Data Search - Michigan LARA*
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/lara/ACA_Plat_Data_Search_660605_7.pdf

## Architecture

One of the most effective ways to narrow down the time period of your home's construction and/or renovations is to consult sources on architecture. This will help you determine the style of your house, to find out when that style was most popular, and what materials were available and common at that time. Note and photo-document the architectural features of the structure. Look for other houses in the area that are similar in period and style.

Check builders' catalogs, manuals, journals and popular magazines (a good source for these is the Detroit Public Library). By 1900 many architectural details were available through catalogs. Some companies, such as Sears-Roebuck and the Aladdin Company in Bay City, even offered complete ready-cut "mail order" building materials for homes, garages, stores, churches, warehouses and hotels. The Roseville Public Library has many architecture books and books on remodeling homes.

Online Architecture Resources

*American House Styles*

*https://www.thisoldhouse.com/21018307/american-house-styles*

*What Style is That House? Visual Guides to Domestic Architectural Designs*

*https://99percentinvisible.org/article/style-house-visual-guides-domestic-architectural-designs/*

*30 Architectural House Styles and Their Defining Characteristics*

*https://www.bhg.com/home-improvement/exteriors/curb-appeal/house-styles/*

*26 Architectural House Styles: Homes That Built American Neighborhoods*

*https://homebuyer.com/learn/house-styles*

*Sears Kit House*

*https://www.searshouses.com/*

Home Architecture Books at the Library

*The Atlas of American Architecture* by Tom Martinson 720.973 M

*Architecture: A Visual History* by Jonathan Glancey 720.9 G

*The Antiques Book of Victorian Interiors* by Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett 728.8 A

*Victorian Dream Homes* 728.372 V

*Two-Story Homes* 728.372 T

*Gothic Architecture* by Louis Grodecki 723.5 G

*Baroque Architecture* by Christian Norberg-Schulz 724.19

*Late Baroque & Rococo Architecture* by Christian Norberg-Schulz 724.19 N

*The Elements of Style: A Practical Encyclopedia of Interior Architectural Details, from 1485 to the Preset* by Stephen Calloway 721 E

*Home Building & Woodworking in Colonial America* by C. Keith Wilbur 694.0973 W (MeL)

## Research Resources

Historic Homes Books at the Library

*A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia and Lee McAlester 917.304 M

*How to Research Your House* by Pamela Brooks 907.2 B

*Discovering the History of Your House* by Betsy Green 907.2 G

*House Histories* by Sally Light 728.09 L

*The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* by Rachel Carley 728.0973 C

*American House Styles* by John Milnes Baker 728.37 B

*Open House* by Merritt Ierley 728.0973 I (MeL)

*Historic Cottages of Mackinac Island* by Susan Stites & Lea Sterling 977.49 S

*Historic Midwest Houses* by John Drury 977 D

Online Resources for Researching Your House

*Guide to Researching the History of a House*
http://www.ipl.org/div/pf/entry/76687

*The Stories Your House Could Tell*
http://www.archives.com/experts/lang-ruth/researching-history-of-your-house.html

*How to Research the History of Your House*
https://www.thisoldhouse.com/21015083/how-to-research-the-history-of-your-house

*How to Research Your Home's Past*
https://www.finehomebuilding.com/2025/04/03/how-to-research-your-homes-past

*Beginner's Guide to Tracing Your House's History*
https://everydayoldhouse.com/guide-research-home-history/

*How to Look Up the History of Your Home*
https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/property-history-how-to-look-up-the-history-of-your-home

Guide to Researching Your Home – Cleveland Restoration Society
https://youtu.be/0s6zKafDdYE?si=P7-D20iMP58B_8MT

House History: A Guide to Uncovering the Stories of Local Buildings and Properties
https://guides.loc.gov/house-history

Michigan Heritage Home Research Guidelines – Historical Society of Michigan
https://www.baycountylibrary.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Researching%20Your%20House%20History.pdf

Roseville Public Library
29777 Gratiot Avenue
(586) 445-5407
rsvlibraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Library location: South of Common Road on Kelly.
http://www.rosevillelibrary.org