

HISTORY OF FORMER OWNERS

- Owners are a big part of the history of your building. Using birth and death records to find obituaries and birth announcements can provide you with more details about former owners.
- Do a newspaper search of former owners to look for articles about them in a local paper. Some Manitowoc county Newspapers have been indexed. Indexes can be found in the Manitowoc Area at MPL or online in the Manitowoc Genealogy and Local History Database.
- You may also be able to track down living descendants. Census records may yield additional clues regarding former occupants of your building, and their ages and occupations at the time of inhabitation. These can be useful in tracking down living descendants, or additional resources in newspapers and city directories.

RESOURCES

Manitowoc Collection at Manitowoc Public Library

- City Directories
- Phone Books
- Newspaper Indexes
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Online

- Genealogy and Local History Database - <http://www.manitowoccollection.org/>
- Manitowoc Local History Collection - <https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/localhistories/mtwcimages/>
- Ancestry Library Edition available at MPL.
- Newspaper Archive available at MPL.
- Newspapers.com available through Badgerlink.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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<https://www.manitowoclibrary.org/genealogy/>

BUILDINGS HAVE A HISTORY

A GUIDE TO RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOME OR STRUCTURE



Homes and other structures - even ones built a few decades ago - may have an interesting past. Your engagement with that past can be helpful in not only understanding reasons for the existence of various architectural features, but can also lead you to a deeper and more meaningful connection with your living environment, place of work, or the community more broadly.

GET TO KNOW THE BUILDING

- Look at the structure for clues regarding it's age.
- Look for obvious alterations or additions.
- Talk to neighbors about the structure, former inhabitants or if possible the site prior to construction.
- A thorough search of the property may also yield clues between walls, under floorboards, in crawlspaces, basement rafters, or other forgotten spaces.
- Former real estate listings may yield clues as to structural alterations as well. Online listings on websites like zillow and realtor.com may be useful for sales within the last 10 years or you may contact local real estate agencies regarding records they have kept on sales that may include photographs.

CHAIN OF TITLE SEARCH

- To determine former inhabitants of the building and original owners, do a chain of title search by examining deeds concerning your property.
- In Manitowoc County, deeds can be found in the Manitowoc County Courthouse. The clerk of the register of deeds can help you perform a change of title search if you provide a parcel number or address.
- When you start your chain of title search, begin with the deed of its most recent owners and work backwards.
- A helpful hint, pertinent documents are cataloged by page number and volume - search from right to left using the printout the clerk will provide.

BUILDING PERMITS

- In Manitowoc County, building permits are done by township. You will need to know what township or have a parcel number of the property to know where to look for a building permit. They are held locally by each township, and filed by street address.
- Building permits can list the original owners, architect, builder, construction costs, dimensions, materials, and date of construction. Occasionally, plans are maintained for structures deemed to be of architectural interest, or of historical importance.
- Further work permits taken out for maintenance, additions, or alterations to the structure may have been filed, and can be found here as well. They will list the estimated cost of the project and the individual or company who completed the work. In the city of Manitowoc these can be found at City Hall by inquiring with the planning office.

UTILITY RECORDS

- If the building isn't too old or rural, the date when utilities records were first connected will give you a good indication of when the building was first occupied. The water company is the best place to start because they pre-date electrical, gas, and sewer systems.

INSURANCE RECORDS

- Historical insurance records contain information about the nature of a building, its contents, value, and even possibly floor plans.
- To do an exhaustive search, contact all insurance companies in your area that have been active for a long period of time. Ask to check their records for any policies sold for that address.
- Fire insurance maps document the size and shape of buildings, locations of doors and windows, construction materials, street names, and property boundaries. The Manitowoc Public Library local history collection contains Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for the years 1883, 1887, 1894, 1900, 1906, 1912, and 1919. An additional Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for the year 1956 can be found online via the Library of Congress website: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?q=wisconsin>

CITY DIRECTORIES

- City Directories provide you with a timeline of the former occupants and possibly with occupations.
- The Manitowoc Collection has city directories dating back to 1868, and many historical city and county maps available for perusal. Cross-reference to confirm address names and potential changes in township over time.