

A GUIDE *for* RESEARCHING WINNIPEG BUILDINGS

City of Winnipeg
Property and Development Services Department



**HISTORICAL
BUILDINGS
COMMITTEE**

Researching your house or building is a unique way to discover more about Winnipeg, your neighbourhood, and the people who helped transform a fur trading post into a major Canadian centre and provincial capital.

This pamphlet is intended to assist you in uncovering historical information on your building - whether you just want to know who has lived or worked in the building or would like to find out detailed information on its structural and architectural details.

The sources and references below should be considered a guide only. Depending on the building, little or no recorded information may be available at the various sources. And it is always a good idea to call before you visit any of the sources listed below for hours of operation and other pertinent information.

And even before you begin your research, why not ask your neighbours? Nearby residents or tenants can often be the best source for information on the street and on its history of development. They may even be able to supply you with names and pictures of former neighbours and other invaluable bits of information.



YOUR FIRST STEP

Each year, you receive a "Statement and Demand for School and Municipal Taxes" from the City of Winnipeg's Tax Branch. On it, you will find your Roll Number and Property Identification (legal description). You will need both to access information held at the City of Winnipeg Assessment Department (main floor, 65 Garry Street). As the building owner (or with written authorization from the owner), you are entitled to view the "Field Form" for your building. On it, you will find the date of construction for your building, as well as information on the construction method (width of the foundation, type of brick used, etc.), dimensions, and possibly a list of City of Winnipeg Building Permits issued to make alterations and repairs. There is no fee for viewing the Field Form or for hand-copying the information. There is a nominal fee for photocopying the Form.

WHAT'S NEXT

Now that you have the date of construction, you can begin finding out more specific details.

The most basic information is uncovering the occupants of your building. There are a number of sources you can utilize to get a list of names from the first residents to the present. One of the most complete is the *Henderson's Directories*, which has published lists of addresses, businesses and residents annually since 1880s. These can be consulted at a number of venues including the Centennial Library (3rd floor, 251 Donald Street) and Legislative Library (200 Vaughan Street). It is important to remember that street addresses and even street names have changed over time – use this source with caution.

Should you wish to consult more precise information, there are two sources: Provincial Land Titles and City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls. The Land Titles Office (Lower Level, 405 Broadway) contains information on land ownership in the province from the 1870s to present. The *Old Systems Abstract Books* are records dating from the 1870s to the early 1900s and are arranged by Parish Lots (found on your "Statement and Demand for School and Municipal Taxes" form). Staff will bring the book to be viewed at no charge and explain the entries. A fee for photocopying pages will be charged. "Certificates of Title" (1900 to present) are issued whenever a piece of property is sold or transferred. This trail of titles can be traced by a staff member at a cost of \$5/title.

The trace can be completed either forward from a specific date or backward and can be limited to a specific period (for example, only those titles issued after 1930) or a dollar amount. These records, however, do not contain information about buildings on the property, nor do the early records describe small parcels of land (such as house lots).

City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls contain detailed information on property ownership from the 1870s to the present and are held at the **City Archives and Records Branch** (380 William Avenue). These large books are arranged by wards and legal descriptions (found on your "Statement and Demand for School and Municipal Taxes" form). The Rolls contain information on buildings on the property, number of residents, tenants, occupations of owners and residents, children, land and building values, and sometimes even the number of livestock. Access to the books is only by permission of the City of Winnipeg Assessment Department and there may be an administration fee charged for their retrieval.

Once you have your list of tenants or residents and what they did, you may wish to discover more about them. There are a number of biographical collections dating to the pre-World War I period that can be helpful (see the Bibliography at the end of this pamphlet under "Biographical"). Another excellent source is held at the Legislative Library. The "Manitoba History Scrapbooks" is a collection of clippings from local newspapers dating back over 100 years arranged into three groups: Political, Historical and Biographical. A card catalogue simplifies the use of this excellent source.

The **Manitoba Genealogical Society** (Unit A - 1045 St. James Street) is another source that can be consulted. The Society has indexed obituaries in Winnipeg papers from 1971-97 and is in the process of indexing earlier years as well. A nominal user fee may be charged for research. The **Manitoba Historical Society** (4th floor, 167 Lombard Avenue) is yet another source that may prove helpful in unearthing biographical and historical information.

The **Provincial Archives of Manitoba** (200 Vaughan Street) includes materials such as diaries, letters and other original documents that are available to the public.

Of course, not every citizen will be included in these books and clippings. It may be that the information from the *Henderson's Directory* is all the biographical data that can be obtained.

BEYOND THE OCCUPANTS

Your Neighbourhood:

One of the best sources for information on your neighbourhood is your local Winnipeg Library branch. Most have local history files, as well as contacts within the community and books, articles and other documents related to your area. Many histories and walking tours have been published covering many of the separate communities that came together to form the City of Winnipeg. (See the Bibliography under "Local Histories.")

Other excellent sources are local historical societies. The regions with societies include: Charleswood, Fort Garry, St. Boniface, St. François-Xavier, St. James, St. Vital, and West Kildonan. Residents' and homeowners' committees and associations can also be a great help. Other community heritage associations should also be consulted such as the Heritage Winnipeg Corporation (Room 509, 63 Albert Street), Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada (Room C116, 123 Doncaster Street), the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society (Room 1, 169 Riverton Avenue), and others. The Manitoba Historical Society is an excellent source for information about these societies and how to contact them.

Details About Your Building:

Should you wish to find out specific details on your building, a number of sources can be consulted.

Insurance companies published Fire Atlases, which detailed all building in Winnipeg and the major towns in Manitoba. Construction material, building height, size, lot dimensions and even occupants are included in these books. The Provincial Archives of Manitoba has sets published in the 1880, 1895 (updated to 1905), 1917-19 and 1950 periods. They are an excellent source, very detailed, and can be used to see what your street or neighbourhood looked like. They cannot be reproduced electronically but can be traced.

The City of Winnipeg Zoning and Permits Branch (main floor, 395 Main Street) can be consulted for information on buildings constructed in the City (1900 to present). Building Permits give information on architect, contractor, size of building, structural details, cost of construction, and the original owner, as well as subsequent alterations made. Plans give exact specifications for construction and subsequent alterations or additions. No plans exist for residential structures prior to 1950 and many older plans were destroyed or never kept by the City. Cost for staff search and photocopying of records is approximately \$50.00.

Photographs may also be available for certain streets and buildings in Winnipeg. The best collections are located at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba and the Western Canada Pictorial Index (Room 404, 63 Albert Street). Both feature extensive photographic collections of buildings, personalities, and events in Winnipeg and around the province. Prices for photographic reproductions vary depending on the size and format required.

Building style:

In many cases, the style of your building can be linked to major patterns of architecture across the continent. Finding out about your building's style increases your understanding of the period in which it was built.

A number of excellent books on architectural styles are available at public libraries across the city (see the Bibliography under "Style").



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If the personality is of particular note, a number of *Who's Who* books are available (various dates).

Style:

A good general style guide for Canada is Maitland, Leslie, et al., *A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles*. Broadview Press, 1992.

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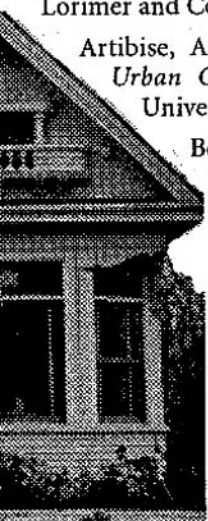
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