YOUR OLD HOUSE
Researching and Renovating Your Home

A publication of the
Special Collections Division of the
Akron-Summit County Public Library
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COVER:
697 West Market Street, Akron, OH

Home of S. Samuel Miller, founder of Mohawk Rubber Company

from West Hill Sketch Book
published by the West Hill Land Company, ca. 1905
How old is my house? Who built it? Who lived here? How did this neighborhood develop? How can I restore and renovate my house? These are some of the questions new or established homeowners may have about their homes. Researching the history of your house can provide answers to these questions, and may possibly reveal other interesting facts about the house you live in. There are a number of resources at the library and in our community that can assist with your quest for clues and answers to your home’s history. This pathfinder includes a selected list of resources that may be found at the Akron-Summit County Public Library, as well as other institutions in our community. For assistance with any of these resources, or help finding additional information, please visit our website www.akronlibrary.org/specialcollections or contact the Special Collections Division at Main Library. 330-643-9030 speccollections@akronlibrary.org

RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE: SOURCES AT THE AKRON-SUMMIT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DIVISION

City Directories
City directories are an excellent source for learning more about the people who lived in your house. City directories, usually published annually, are divided into two primary sections. The resident section includes an alphabetical listing of people living in a community and lists head of the household, place of employment and/or occupation, and name of spouse. Some early directories may include the names of children. City directories can help to approximate the year a house was built. The address section is arranged alphabetically by the name of the street, and
lists residents by address. City directories may also provide clues to the ethnic makeup of a neighborhood. A scan of street listings may reveal that most residents were of a particular ethnic or cultural group. One caveat of city directory research is that street numbering systems often changed during the early part of the twentieth century.

**Akron City Directories**
1859-present (including most years for Cuyahoga Falls and Barberton)

Akron City Directories for the years 1859-1969 are also available in a digital format and may be browsed or searched via the Library’s website from the following link: [www.akronlibrary.org/specialcollections](http://www.akronlibrary.org/specialcollections)

**Biography File**
In these files may be found copies of newspaper articles about local individuals that have appeared in the Akron Beacon Journal and other publications. It is arranged alphabetically.

**Obituaries**
Obituaries can be a valuable source of biographical information about local residents. Special Collections holds the Akron Beacon Journal on microfilm from 1841 to the present, as well as indexes to obituaries for the following years:

- 1841-1913 On catalog cards
- 1937-present *Akron Beacon Journal* Obituary Index

Also available online:
[www.akronlibrary.org/specialcollections](http://www.akronlibrary.org/specialcollections)
In addition, the library participates in the Hayes Research Library’s Ohio Obituary index, http://index.rbhayes.org/hayes/index/, a statewide index to obituaries published in newspapers throughout the State of Ohio, including the *Akron Beacon Journal* and its predecessor papers.

**Ohio Death Certificates, 1908-1953**
Biographical information included on death certificates typically includes birth date, occupation, place of birth, parents’ names and place of birth, and cause of death. Digital images of these records may be searched and viewed online through *Family Search*: [https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1307272](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1307272)

**County and City Histories**
In the late 19th century, many county histories were published. These books frequently included biographical sketches about members of a community. Special Collections has an extensive collection of city and county histories for Summit, as well as other counties in Ohio, and other states. Additional full text city and county histories are available through the Library’s subscription to the database *Heritage Quest Online* which may be accessed from any Akron-Summit County Public Library agency, or from your home computer via the Library’s website, [www.akronlibrary.org](http://www.akronlibrary.org). Some may also be found on Google Books, [http://books.google.com/](http://books.google.com/) and Archive.org, [https://archive.org](https://archive.org).

**Family Histories**
Special Collections owns a large collection of published family histories. Check the online catalog or consult with a Special Collections staff member for more information about this collection.
**Estate Records**
Estate records can provide valuable information about former house owners. Special Collections has Summit County Probate Court estate records on microfilm for the years 1841-1944.

**Census**
Since 1790, the United States has taken a census of its citizens. Prior to the 1850 census, only the name of the head of household was listed. Beginning in 1850, the census listed every individual in each household, and, depending upon the year of the census, much additional information about its residents. The Library has access to these records through subscriptions to the online databases Ancestry Library Edition, Heritage Quest and World Vital Records. [www.akronlibrary.org](http://www.akronlibrary.org).

**Land and Property Records**
Special Collections has the following resources that may be helpful to house researchers:
- Summit County grantee and grantor indexes, 1840-1914
- Index to grantors, Trumbull, Portage, Medina and Stark Counties, 1795-1840

**Atlases, Plat Books and Maps**
Special Collections maintains a collection of 19th and 20th century Summit County maps and historical atlases. See a Special Collections staff member for more information about this collection, or visit our Summit Memory Project Online Map Room to view many of these resources: [http://www.summitmemory.org/cdm/onlinemaproom](http://www.summitmemory.org/cdm/onlinemaproom)
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970
These detailed maps, produced by the D.A. Sanborn Company, depict commercial and residential sections of cities in the United States. Each map indicates the site, size and shape, building material, and use of homes, commercial buildings and factories. Sanborn maps for Ohio are accessible from the Library’s Research Databases page: http://www.akronlibrary.org/. Special Collections also has these maps on microfilm for the city of Akron and some communities in Summit County.

Other Genealogical and Local Historical Sources in Special Collections
Special Collections maintains many other genealogical and local history resources in multiple formats that may provide additional information about former homeowners. Our Archives Catalog (link at www.akronlibrary.org/research/databases-by-title#a) includes records for many items in our collections, including photographs. In addition, Summit Memory, www.SummitMemory.org includes thousands of digital images of Summit County, including many of local houses. For further assistance, check with a Special Collections staff member, or visit the Special Collections website at: www.akronlibrary.org/specialcollections.
COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL RECORDS

Summit County Fiscal Officer
175 S. Main St.
Akron, OH 44308
http://fiscaloffice.summitoh.net

The Fiscal Office holds records and documents pertaining to real estate taxes and property values.

Auditor's Division (3rd Floor)
330-643-2636
- Real estate assessments
- Property appraisal
- Estate taxes
- Personal property taxes
- Mobile home taxes

Recorder's Division (4th Floor)
330-643-2712
- Deeds
- Mortgages
- Plats and Tax maps
- Easements
- Financial statements
- Land contracts

Treasurer's Division (3rd Floor)
330-643-2587
- Real estate taxes, delinquent taxes and tax certificate liens
OTHER LOCAL RESOURCES

The University of Akron Archival Services
Polsky Building LL10
225 S. Main St. (Enter from High St.)
Akron, OH 44325-1702
330-972-7670
www.uakron.edu/libraries/archives/

The University of Akron Archival Services collects, preserves, and provides access to primary and secondary source materials that document the history of the University of Akron and the region. It is also a local government records repository for a nine-county region that includes Summit and Portage counties.

Among its diverse holdings are Auditor’s/Treasurer’s Tax Duplicates from Summit County dating from 1840 to 1940 and Portage County dating from 1812 to 1953. These documents are useful in researching the history of a house as they include valuations of real and personal property and sometimes show additions of new structures.

Archival Services is open to the public Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm.
BOOKS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

House History Research
These titles may provide additional suggestions for researching the history of your house.

Akron Historic Landmark Survey
720.28 Ak733a

Gordon, Stephen C.
How to Complete the Ohio Historic Inventory
720.28 G665h

Houck, Maurcia DeLean
If These Walls Could Talk: An Easy Guide to Tracking Your House’s History
728.3707 H835i

Houses and Homes: Exploring Their History
307.336 H842h

Light, Sally
House Histories: A Guide to Tracing the Genealogy of Your Home
728.37 L723h

Architectural Style
Architectural styles vary greatly among American cities and neighborhoods. A number of factors contribute to this. In Akron, for example, many homes in Goodyear Heights are of the English cottage architectural style. The reason for this is that F.A. Seiberling, the founder of Goodyear and developer of
Goodyear Heights had a preference for that style. The Library has many resources that can help you determine the style of your home.

Morgan, William  
**Abrams Guide to American House Styles**  
728.3709 M849ab

Howard, Hugh  
**How Old Is This House?**  
728.028 H849h

Massey, James C.  
728.372 M416h

Phillips, Steven H.  
**Old House Dictionary: An Illustrated Guide to American Domestic Architecture**  
720.321 P563o

Van Buren, Maurie  
**House Styles at a Glance**  
728 V221h

**RESTORING AND RENOVATING YOUR HOUSE**  
Restoring or renovating an old house can be a rewarding experience. The library has an extensive collection of books to help you plan, design, and carry out your plans.

Hutchins, Nigel  
**Restoring Old Houses**  
643.7 H97r
Hutchins, Nigel
*Restoring Houses of Brick and Stone*
643.7 H97re

Jenrette, Richard Hampton
*Adventures with Old Houses*
643.7 J54ad

Kitchen, Judith L.
*Caring for Your Old House*
643.7 K62c

Lawson, Jeanne B.
*Complete Guide to Renovating Older Homes*
643.7 L425co

Lubeck, Aaron
*Green Restorations, Sustainable Building, and Historic Homes*
643.7 L928gr

**AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS**

Our Audiovisual Services Division has many how-to videos for renovating your home. A selection follows, but be sure to check the library’s catalog for more.

**So You’re Renovating! Do-It-Yourself Video Collection**

**Fine Homebuilding DVD Workshop**

**Today’s Homeowner** with Danny Lipford

**Ask This Old House** from the television series
PERIODICALS
These titles are available in the magazines and newspapers section of the Science and Technology Division at Main Library. Some may also be available at branch libraries. Check the online catalog for a complete list of holdings.

American Bungalow: www.americanbungalow.com
Arts & Crafts Homes: http://artsandcraftshomes.com
Early American Life: www.ealonline.com
Old House Journal: www.oldhousejournal.com
Preservation: www.preservationnation.org/magazine
Renovation Style: www.renovationstyle.com
This Old House: www.thisoldhouse.com/toh
Traditional Home Magazine: www.traditionalhome.com
Victorian Homes: www.beckettmedia.com/vh

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

Cleveland Restoration Society and Preservation Resource Center of Northeastern Ohio
Sarah Benedict House
3751 Prospect Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44115-2705
216-426-1000
www.clevelandrestoration.org/
As a statewide and local partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, this organization provides free technical assistance, resources, educational programs, and events to individuals and organizations pursuing historic preservation opportunities in Northeast Ohio. A monthly e-newsletter gives information on regional events, workshops, and the latest on local & national preservation news.
Heritage Home Program
http://www.heritagehomeprogram.org/
The Heritage Home program of the Cleveland Restoration Society offers free technical advice, construction resources, “how to” articles, contractor bid review, and custom work specifications to owners of older homes. Construction staff can also make a free site visit to your property to look at old house maintenance issues and make recommendations for preservation or repair projects. Great low interest financing is also available for homeowner projects.

HERITAGE PRESERVATION SERVICES

National Center for Cultural Resources
National Park Service
1201 Eye St., NW, 2255
Washington, DC 20005
www.nps.gov/history/preservation.htm

National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye St., NW
8th Floor (MS 2280)
Washington, DC 20005
202-354-2213
www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/
index.htm
National Trust for Historic Preservation (Midwest Office)
53 W. Jackson Blvd.
Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604
312-939-5547
www.preservationnation.org

Ohio Historic Preservation Office
567 E. Hudson St.
Columbus, OH 43211-1030
614-298-2000
www.ohiohistory.org/resource/histpres
Sponsors “Building Doctor” programs to help homeowners identify and solve problems associated with old houses.

Progress Through Preservation of Greater Akron
Preservation House
2074 W. Market St.
Akron, OH 44313
330-374-3787
www.preservationakron.org
A non-profit organization whose goal is to raise the consciousness of preservation in Akron and Summit County by actively encouraging the preservation, maintenance, restoration, and adaptive reuse of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods that are of historic or architectural importance. Meetings with guest speakers are held at various local historic sites are held throughout the year. In addition to cooperating and participating with other community organizations and local governments, PTP recognizes our community’s preservation efforts, sponsors conferences, tours and workshops, and publishes a newsletter.
Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens
Preservation and Restoration Consultants
714 N. Portage Path
Akron, OH 44303
Lead consultant, Mark N. Gilles, AIA
330-315-3240
mgilles@stanhywet.org
www.stanhywet.org
Architectural restoration and full preservation nomination and documentation services to homeowners, businesses, municipalities and non-profit organizations.

USEFUL WEBSITES

National Park Service
Technical Preservation Services for Historic Buildings
Preservation Briefs
http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm

U.S. Secretary of the Interior: Standards for Rehabilitation
http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm
Akron-Summit County Public Library Mobile App

Take the Library with you.

- Manage your Library account
- Search the catalog
- Stream movies and music
- Access e-books, audiobooks and e-magazines
- Improve skills with online learning tools
- Pay fines
- Search our calendar of events
- Find locations, directions and hours
- Contact us

www.akronlibrary.org