A Methodology for Documenting the History of Michigan Houses Built between 1830 and 1930

Esther M. Walton

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A METHODOLOGY FOR DOCUMENTING THE HISTORY OF MICHIGAN HOUSES BUILT BETWEEN 1830 AND 1930

by

Esther M. Walton

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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A METHODOLOGY FOR DOCUMENTING THE HISTORY OF MICHIGAN HOUSES BUILT BETWEEN 1830 AND 1930

Esther M. Walton

Western Michigan University, 1981

This thesis delineates the methodology for documenting the history of Michigan houses built between 1830 and 1930. Three major areas of documentation are discussed. They are record search, architectural style and physical examination, as well as the location of relevant material. Each type and kind of public and private records, written, cartographic and visual are explained as to their importance and use for house research.

A brief overview of architectural style is presented along with illustration. Within the architectural style is a discussion on the physical examination of a house.

The conclusions are presented as a case study complete with actual worksheets. A researcher following the procedures outlined in the thesis will be able to document a house to within two years of its construction date, and to provide a history of its occupants.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis grew out of a historic districting project 1978-79. Since then many people and institutions have encouraged and helped me to complete the work. I would like to express my thanks to the staffs of Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections at Kalamazoo, The State of Michigan Archives, the History Division, and the State Library at Lansing for advise and guidance.

I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to Larry Massie, Richard Loughrin, Sylvia Dulaney, Janet Kreger, Tom Bowles, and my husband Jack Walton for council, editing, advise and proofreading. I would also like to thank Judith Massie for typing the paper.

Esther M. Walton
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PREFACE

This thesis was developed to assist people who now own an old house and wish to learn more about its history. It is also designed to assist people who are engaged in efforts to locate and document our historic and architectural heritage. It may be of assistance to others who just enjoy viewing the exteriors of beautiful buildings. The thesis examines architectural styles, documentation, and the methodology needed to date an old house accurately.
CHAPTER I

Introduction

This thesis will describe the methodology used in researching Michigan residential architecture of the period 1830-1930. Architectural history is a relatively new field of study. While there are many books available on architectural style, there is little information on the physical structure of an historic building. Material on physical structure is fragmented among building-trade magazines, out-of-print books, and one or two volumes devoted to the examination of building construction before 1870. There is no book covering the two subjects together.

To illustrate how architectural history is a neglected subject, Alan Gowan commented, "Our master builders, largely unknown today, were not quoted in newspapers and their portraits were not painted for posterity."1 Recently, people have begun to understand architectural history; they appreciate old buildings and wish to document their history. This thesis suggests a methodology for documenting the age and style of buildings, particularly houses.

The need for historic site documentation can be viewed as a result of increased popular interest in architectural history. In order to understand residential architecture and the reason people are studying it, it is necessary to review the growth of the historic preservation movement from 1877 to the present, the period of its greatest activity.

The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, of 1876, celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, hosted nearly ten million people and heightened the nation's consciousness of its history. The subsequent emergence of the United States as a world leader developed people's awareness "of their own cultural and historic images....Nowhere is there a more tangible evidence of our history than in our architecture."² Although people brought architectural ideas with them when they immigrated to America, they soon developed their own styles and techniques. As the nineteenth century wore on the American builders grew less dependent on European architects. In the 1920s, however, American architects adapted European and Asian architectural features to their style while European architects were adapting American ideas. The result has been the development of an international style.

After World War II, a building boom brought about several major departures from the traditional, unplanned growth of American communities. Because of the long-postponed fulfillment of the need for housing and the large areas needed for housing development projects, new residential construction took place in rural rather than urban areas. Residential tract development, the construction of nearby shopping centers, the development of super highways, and the increased use of automobiles caused a major exodus from the city. One long-range effect was the depletion of the tax base in cities.

²Ibid., preface.
In the ambience of the times, people revered the idea that everything new was good and everything old was bad. Many critics referred to "Victorian" architecture as ugly. It was generally thought more economical to tear down an old building and erect a new one than to renovate an existing building, and that it cost less to move out to adjacent undeveloped areas. New buildings were designed around "functions," and often to serve only a specific type of business. The cities were left with vacant buildings in run-down business and residential districts. The middle-class families moved to rural tract developments and relinquished nice old houses to landlords and finally to the ravages of ghetto use. This transition destroyed our cities assuredly as the bombs of World War II destroyed European cities. Two federally-funded projects, highway expansion and urban renewal, hastened the destruction.

Urban renewal projects brought Federal monies to our larger cities for removal of "old" buildings which did not produce enough revenue. Highways, parking lots, or new buildings replaced the buildings at the sacrifice of aesthetics for utilitarian purposes. Urban renewal placed no value on buildings of historic nature, even when they were so well constructed they would have been useful for another hundred years. In the 1950s and 60s the maxim of accountants was accepted: it was less expensive to remove an old building and replace it with a larger one than it was to remodel it. The accountants projected profits from additional rental spaces, faster return on the investor's dollar, and tax deductions as incentives. Little thought
was given to preserving historic buildings even though they were architecturally significant.

Any building in the way of urban renewal was torn down. Preservation was rare. Historic and architecturally significant buildings were thought to be less valuable than the land they occupied, which could be used better in the construction of new buildings for the "renewal" of the city. Public policy was oblivious of the aesthetic and historic value of buildings and reimbursed the owner through a tax write-off for destroying old buildings. Owners of vacant buildings were taxed on both the structure and the lot. When a building did not produce revenue, it was torn down. Thus the owner benefited in two ways: he received a tax write-off and he paid lower taxes on the vacant lot. Standing buildings incurred additional costs. Insurance companies increased rates on older buildings in run-down neighborhoods because the risk of fire was greater.

The destruction of historic and architecturally beautiful buildings brought forth a cry of protest from some people, but the protests rarely resulted in the preservation of a building. Every large city lost excellent examples of its architecture. Finally, however, the indifference of the federal, state, and local governments and the apathy of the general public motivated protesters to form special-interest groups generally known as "preservationists." These preservationists started the historic preservation movement.

**Historic Preservation Movement**

Until the 1960s, the generally accepted concept of preservation
was limited to interest in a few buildings of outstanding importance, such as Independence Hall, Mount Vernon, and Monticello, which were as noted for the historic significance of the events associated with them as for their architectural style. But the modern preservationists began to fight for architectural heritage as well. They expressed alarm when examples of that heritage were sentenced to the wrecking ball. For example, in the 1960s a preservationist in Grand Rapids, Michigan, chained herself to the wrecking ball to dramatize her protest against the destruction of the city hall.³

During this period people became disillusioned by the sterility of their modern cities. Stripped of individual style, one city seemed indistinguishable from another. In older parts of the city, people surveyed the cancerous holes left by the destruction of old buildings with as much sorrow and despair as refugees of World War II viewed their bombed cities.

The 1960s spurred preservationists to preserve familiar landmarks. In 1967 the National Trust for Historic Preservation was established. It began the only nationwide nonprofit organization chartered by Congress to encourage public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects significant in American history and culture.⁴ Through the National Trust and similar state and local groups, these concerned citizens successfully promoted national legislation authorizing historic commissions on the state and local level.

⁴National Trust Preservation Act of 1966.
The impact of the National Trust may be measured by the fact that in 1967 there were "fewer than 1,000 significant properties listed on the National Register of Historic places" and by January, 1980, "nearly 10,000 properties are included."\textsuperscript{5} Listings on the National Register are made through the Historic Preservation official in each state.\textsuperscript{6}

The 1970s saw a reaction against the destruction of beautiful old buildings and against the monotony of the modern glass and steel buildings in the city's business district. People decided to preserve their significant old buildings and blend them with contemporary buildings embodying new ideas that would make the community architecturally beautiful.

As a result of the Bicentennial celebration of 1976, Americans' interest in their history has accelerated, as shown by the proliferation of village museums and historic districts. From Williamsburg to "Main Street" in Disney World, people are eager to immerse themselves in "living history." They are fascinated by the country's history, even though their interpretation of it ranges from authentic restorations to the construction of completely imaginary villages.

**Historic Background**

An accurate understanding of contemporary circumstances is necessary to interpret the history of any building. Events such as war,\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{5}James Biddle, Letter to National Trust Members, January, 1980.

\textsuperscript{6}Historic Preservation Official for Michigan is Martha Bigelow, Director of the History Division for the State of Michigan.
inflation, depression, mass immigration patterns, and industrial development have had a direct bearing on where and how towns grew. Furthermore, local climate, economics, politics, social life and customs, inter-family relationships, and educational background have influenced the architecture of an area.

William Searles, author of Recreating the Historic House Interior, describes the sources for this information:

Your initial reading will result in a bibliography, as well as copious notes. The bibliography will include perhaps four surveys, one or two world histories, and several United States histories. There will be perhaps ten or twelve monographs, books and articles covering certain events....the state histories might be many or few depending on the state, but the scholarly articles are probably numerous and are likely to exist on practically every subject, some dealing with the state, others with the region, and still others with the locality. These will give you grass roots politics, biography, some social life and customs, the analysed contents of personal letters and diaries, and now and then as taste of local architecture and decorative arts. These are the building stones of a firm historical foundation.7

The researcher has to understand the general historical composition of a community to interpret its history accurately, and the history of a house is part of the history of its community.

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CHAPTER II

Definition and Location of Records

Definition

T.R. Schellenberg, an authority on records management, distinguishes two general types of archival records. Public records are those produced by a governmental unit at taxpayer's expense, hence they belong to the public. Historical records are similar documents from private sources. Records are also classified as (a) textual materials, such as books, tax rolls, diaries, and letters; (b) cartographic materials such as maps, charts, diagrams and surveys (for example, geological surveys and topographical maps) and (c) pictorial materials such as photographic prints and negatives, paintings, drawings, lithographs, etchings, and engravings, or reproductions thereof such as postcards, newspaper pictures, and other mass-produced pictures.¹

Location of Public Records

Public records are found in two major locations, the office of origin and the State Archives. In the office of origin current records are generated and many non-current records are filed. As will be described more specifically, later, public records are located in county, township, city, state, and federal offices.

County Records

The County Clerk has the records of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces occurring within the county, the last because the clerk, as clerk of the Circuit Court, maintains that court's files. He is also clerk of the County Board of Commissioners (formerly the County Board of Supervisors) and preserves the records of that body. Since he is also clerk of other county bodies, his office is the official repository for all county records which the law requires to be filed. The County Clerk's Office usually has the annual reports and names and addresses of all current agencies working within that unit of government.

In general, the following records can be found in the office specified: land transfer documents in the Register of Deeds Office and abstract office, property tax rolls in the County Treasurer's Office, and files of estates of deceased persons and guardianships in the Probate Court. Miscellaneous county records may be found in the Planning and Zoning office and in the Equalization (of taxes) office.

Township Records

Township records are more difficult to locate. In early times, records were not always kept in township halls but were stored in the officeholder's homes. Even today some township officials maintain their offices at home. The tax assessment rolls, were compiled by the township supervisor. At one time the supervisor was also the assessor,
but in recent years the assessor is usually another person. The tax rolls compiled by these former supervisors or assessors may still be stored in their residences or may be in other, unknown places. However, because the supervisor or assessor gave a copy of the tax assessment rolls to the County Treasurer, the more accessible source of information is the County property tax rolls.²

City Records

The primary city offices containing information for a house search are the fire inspector, building regulatory and planning, and zoning. The building regulatory office, which contains building permits, is a rich source of information. Inquiries should be made concerning permits for construction, remodeling or razing of buildings, and permits pertaining to fire safety.

Few cities issued these permits before 1900. New York City had fire and building codes in the late 18th century,³ Detroit, Michigan, in the 1880s,⁴ and Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1919.⁵ Small towns such

²Both assessment rolls and property tax rolls will be referred to in this paper as tax rolls.


⁴Mark Coir, A Manual for the Use of Building Permits as Issued by the Fire Marshal, (Burton Historical Collections, Detroit, Mich., 1978).

as Hastings, Michigan, did not adopt building codes until the 1950s.\(^6\)

The search for public records should begin in the office of origin. Only after a search there has been unsuccessful should one call or write to the State Archives to inquire whether the records are on deposit there. Some of the Archives' records, however, may have been placed in repositories in other parts of the state, so one must also learn which repository has the records and where it is located. A telephone call or letter might well save an unnecessary journey to Lansing.

Also, one must keep in mind that many unique records have been destroyed by fire over the years.

In early years the laws requiring that records in the office of origin be kept from destruction or requiring their review and examination by state officials before destruction were not as precise as now. Presently the law requires that the office of origin notify the State Archives, which will examine and store selected records, then permit the local office to destroy those which remain. Nowadays the office of origin usually microfilms the records before disposing of them.

State Records

A house researcher is seldom able to complete their research

\(^6\)City of Hastings, Building Permits and Codes for the City of Hastings (Hastings: 1950).

\(^7\)Michigan Public Act number 147 of 1964.
The State Library collects the published historical records relating to Michigan. The State Archives, located in Lansing and at regional repositories throughout the state, holds the official original public records of the State of Michigan, records of the State legislature, and some county, township, city, and village records which it has acquired.

Representative material found in the State Archives are tax rolls, census reports, copies of federal records pertaining to the state, cartographical material, land economic surveys of the 1920s, photographs, state military records, original land surveys, and Works Project Administration (WPA) Rural Properties Inventories of the 1930s. A Guide to State Archives of Michigan was published in 1975. Persons researching school buildings will find special materials in the Report of The School Inspectors, 1859-1930, which describes every schoolhouse in the State of Michigan. Another useful source is the Index of Local and Special Acts of Michigan, which lists laws passed for a local or special benefit, such as highways, railroads, incorporation of businesses, name changes for various places, and boundaries of cities and towns.

The State Library, which is located in Lansing, has a section containing information on nearly 80,000 published books and periodicals, 60,000 microfilms, 2,500 subject and biographical file folders,

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9Index may be found in County Court houses or libraries.
2,000 maps, and copies of 25,000 state documents. The library also contains microfilmed Michigan newspapers, Great Lakes Survey Charts from 1860 to the present, and U.S. Department of Interior Geological Survey maps. The library's extensive collection of out-of-print architectural books and periodicals is a valuable source of information for the house researcher.

United States Governmental Records

United States government printed records, such as census schedules, land records, military records, and reports on farm operations and rural life, may be found in the libraries of large cities. When the desired material is not available in a large city library the researcher can write the National Archives in Washington, D.C., for published catalogs of its collections. These will help him to locate the material and a nearby library that is authorized to borrow from the National Archives. He can then ask that library to have the materials sent to it on loan so that he can study them on the premises.

Location of Private Records

Private historical records can be found in various locations, for example in city, county, and township public libraries which have books and materials on local history. Larger libraries have separate historical collections, but even those which do not can provide a starting point for research in documentary sources. These references will then guide the reader to material available in the National Archives, in manuscript holdings of other historical collections, and in listed
microfilmed newspapers. The list of reference books in Appendix A of this paper may also assist the researcher.

Private records are also located in historical collections associated with museums, historical societies, or private individuals. The collections are the result of particular efforts to acquire and preserve all available published material relating to the history of the area. They generally hold manuscript collections compiled by individuals. Michigan has twelve major historical collections, which are listed by John Cummings in A Guide for Writing of Local History:

Ann Arbor: The William Clement Library and the Michigan Historical Collection at the Bentley Historical Library, both on the University of Michigan Campus.

Detroit: The Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library, and the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University.

East Lansing: The Historical Collection and Land Grant Research Center at Michigan State University.

Flint: The Flint Public Library.

Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids Public Library.

Houghton: Michigan Technological University Library.

Kalamazoo: Kalamazoo Public Library and Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections.


Marquette: Marquette County Historical Society.

Mount Pleasant: Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University.

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Because these twelve collections are maintained primarily for research, photocopying of fragile materials is not allowed. Some books that are still in print may be borrowed, but ordinarily the researcher should be prepared to research on site.

Libraries, archives, and some historical collections regularly exchange lists of their respective holdings, which are published in the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC) by the Library of Congress. However, museums do not exchange such lists and therefore it is difficult to determine, without direct reference, which records and manuscripts each museum has. Three museum directories will be of assistance to the researcher: The Directory of Historical Collections in the State of Michigan, by Richard Hathaway (1969), gives the location as well as an overview of the holdings of the historical collections in the state. Directory of Historical Collections and Historical Societies in Michigan, published by the Historical Society of Michigan (1973), lists all known Michigan historical societies, their location, and programs, with a brief synopsis of the collections of each place or society. Michigan Museum Directory, published by the Michigan Museum Association and the American Automobile Association of Michigan (1978), lists only the names and addresses of museums in the state, without information as to their archival or historical collection holdings.

The house researcher should be prepared to search for old records, public as well as private. Old official records were sometimes destroyed, given to private individuals, or kept by the official after
his term of office and not turned over to his successor. In order to be thorough, the researcher should explore all possibilities. For example, original issues of the first one hundred years of the Hastings Banner are housed in the Bentley Historical Library of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. However, microfilm copies of most of the issues are also available in Hastings at the office of the son of a former owner of the Banner. In another instance, while current county tax rolls are kept at the Barry County Treasurer's Office in Hastings, early tax rolls were found at the Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections in Kalamazoo. Important older public records have been discovered in the basement of the homes of retired township officials or stored in the closets and attic of the courthouse. Important private records of a former state official were retrieved from the attic of a downtown business building. Insurance records of the past fifty years remain in the office of a local insurance agency. The location of other private records are scattered around the county in various city, village, and township libraries and in Charlton Park Village and Museum, near Hastings.
CHAPTER III

Textual Records

Public Records—County

All county records are open to public inspection. Exceptions to this rule are adoption records and secret marriage license records in Probate Court. When a person starts on a search of county records it is wise to make an appointment by telephone or letter. The researcher might introduce himself or herself, explain the project, request a convenient time and possible work space, and express consideration of the fact that the work of the office must continue. Such an explanation will clarify the researcher's mission and reduce staff apprehension about random, indiscriminate searching. Generally, the county official and his staff will appreciate such an approach and will reciprocate. While they are not expected to do the research, when approached in this manner they will usually assist in locating the paper, book, or record desired. However, the researcher is not likely to receive assistance if he appears without notice and demands to see the records immediately.

Sometimes a misinformed or uninformed staff employee will say that the records are not open to the public. In such instances, the researcher should ask the prosecuting attorney or county civil attorney to inform the employee that all county records are public records and are open to inspection.
In the following pages county records, certain township records, and their functions and offices of origin are described.

**Land Transfer Records**

House research must start with a legal description of the land on which the house was built. This will be found in the Register of Deeds Office, which records all documents showing the transfer of title to real property. Each year the office indexes these transfers alphabetically by the grantor (seller) and the grantee (buyer), giving the book (liber) and page number of the transfer document. If the researcher knows the name of the owner and the approximate date the house was built, he should start his search at this office. Records of Chattel Mortgages on personal properties, real estate, Lis Pendens, Tax Sales, Tax Liens, and Recorded Plats are also kept in this office.

Using the title transfer documents from the Register of Deeds Office, an abstract office will make summaries or abstracts of titles for the properties involved. These abstracts will be indexed in separate books for cities, villages, platted areas, and township quarter sections. Unlike transfer documents, they are indexed by legal description. Therefore, if the researcher knows the legal description of a property but not the owner's name, he should start his search in the abstract office. This may be a public office or a privately owned one. If the latter, he is expected to pay for the services he receives.

**Tax Rolls**

Township assessment rolls fix the valuation of each piece of pro-
property and provide the name of the owner. A copy is filed in the County Treasurer's Office. When county, school, and other taxes are added to the roll it is called the county property "tax roll." The tax roll indicates these taxes and the personal property tax, whether the taxpayer is a person other than the owner, and the date the taxes were paid. A chain of ownership for the property can be established through the year-by-year tax rolls.

Often the tax rolls offer the only public record that a certain person once lived in the township. Genealogists and other researchers use these records to find persons who cannot be located otherwise.

As mentioned above, if the existence or location of the original township records is not known, a copy of the tax assessment rolls and tax rolls will be found at the County Treasurer's office. If the tax rolls are not there, they will be found at the State Archives or one of its regional repositories. Sometimes assessment rolls were transferred to the State Archives and the County Treasurer's Office did not keep a record of that fact. As a result, county treasurers did not always know which tax records had been removed. However, this situation has been remedied and the treasurer's offices now have a list of all tax rolls transferred to the State Archives.

The County Treasurer's staff need time to locate early tax records. Since they make little if any use of these records and requests for them are infrequent, the staff are often unaware how far back their records go. Consequently, the researcher may need patience and persistence in order to get the records unearthed. This is especially
true in the spring of the year, when the assessor brings his tax rolls to the treasurer’s office and for a month or so the office is too busy to provide much, if any, assistance.

**Vital Records**

The County Clerk’s Office registers births, deaths, marriages, and divorces within the county. These records are indexed. The indexes are alphabetized and listed year by year, and the records are filed by date. The early records provide little information because vital records were not required in Michigan before 1868 and many marriages, births, and deaths were never recorded. The earliest records list only the event, the persons directly involved, and the date and place. Recent records give more information, however. For example, birth records now have the child’s name, date of birth, sex, the parents’ names, respective places of birth, occupations, ages at time of the birth, and current address.

Death records give the name, date of death, cause of death, age, marital status, surviving spouse, date of record, place of birth, date of birth, name of parents, and their places of birth. There may be an additional book in recent years recording deaths of county residents whose deaths occurred outside the county. This record is not required legally but is kept as a service for county residents.

Marriages are listed in the **Index of Marriages** under both the husband’s name and the wife’s maiden name or her name before marriage. The index will furnish names, date, and the book of record (liber).
The actual record will give bride's name before marriage, her maiden name if different, the groom's name, their respective ages, the parents of each, place of birth of each, the minister's name, witnesses' names, and the date and place of marriage.

For the researcher the important data are names, dates, addresses, the events (birth, death, marriage, divorce), and the Liber (book) number or letter and page containing the record.

Divorce records are kept in the Circuit Court files maintained by the County Clerk. Divorce files are likely to contain a house address and legal description in the property settlement portion of the divorce decree or judgement.

Until the vital statistics are known, transfers of property between persons having different last names on the tax rolls would not reflect the fact that the transfer is between members of the same family. A careful recording of the various deaths, births, marriages, and divorces will outline the family structure and relationships. The transfer of property between related persons having different last names can be significant in writing the history of a house.

Deceased and Guardianship Estates

The Probate Court can be a valuable source of information about family relationships, social relationships, and descriptions of property. This primarily records estates of deceased persons and guardianships of minors, also guardianships of mentally incompetent adult persons. Each file contains a petition naming the heirs; minors, or
incompetent persons, (as the case may be); an inventory of the estate; accountings of the administrator, executor, or guardian describing the change in the nature of the assets, the expenses or claims paid, and the property remaining on hand and a final accounting and order of distribution of the assets of the estate, sometimes known as the order assigning the residue of the estate.

There is a limit to the information one can find in probate records. Many deceased persons leave no estate because their property passes directly to a survivor with joint title. All family members are not necessarily named in probate records, and their addresses are not recorded. Sometimes the date the estate is probated is several years after the date of death. Not knowing the person's legal place of residence at the time of death can often be a barrier to finding the probate records because the estate is probated in the county of residence. Older people sometimes reside with their children, and their probate records will be found in the state and county where the children lived. Furthermore, probate records are titled only in the name of the primary person, e.g., the deceased or the ward in a guardianship case.

For a comprehensive history of a house or an historical reconstruction, the researcher needs to locate occupants and, when possible, an inventory of their possessions. Sometimes the estate's inventory will contain a detailed list of the contents of the house. Wills often contain a list of relatives and friends who could provide an oral history of the house. "Roughly half of the people in America,
historically, have either left wills or have been mentioned in them.\textsuperscript{11} So the probate court is an important place in which to search for information.

Most Probate records remain in the office of origin or have been microfilmed, while a few have been transferred to the State Archives. For example, the early Barry County Probate Court records from the 1840s to about 1900 are in the regional repository at Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections, Kalamazoo. A unique item in those records was an appraiser's statement that a house was under construction at the time the deceased died.\textsuperscript{12} No house was ever dated more specifically.

Circuit Court Records

The researcher will find some information in Circuit Court civil action files, but before looking there he should have some indication that information that would help date a house is available in a certain lawsuit or proceeding. Divorce actions found in Chancey Court records may contain a description of the house, or a controversy over real property may yield information. Also, a Lis Pendens filed in the Register of Deeds will signal a pending lawsuit. The Lis Pendens notifies the public that a lawsuit involves certain real estate, but not necessarily a house.


\textsuperscript{12}Barry County Probate A1000, file No, 1486, WMU Archives, Kalamazoo.
Among Circuit Court Records, Chancey and Law Cases provide the best source for old house research since Criminal prosecutions will rarely identify houses. If a house is connected with a notorious crime, the researcher would learn more about it from other sources, such as newspapers or oral history.

Among records that are not found in Circuit Court are Notices of Liens, which are filed in the Register of Deeds Office.

Public Records—City

Building Permits

Building permits issued by a city department are an excellent source of documentation, but few cities in Michigan issued permits before 1880. While Detroit began issuing permits as early as 1877 some smaller villages still do not require them.13

The purpose of permits is to ensure that the buildings meet the fire and safety codes established by the city. Many cities require that buildings meet minimum building standards. Details such as tile roofs and brick exteriors to prevent fires from spreading are a common type of requirement.14

The search for old building permits begins with an inquiry to the City Clerk for the office which issues the current permits. There are two possible offices, the building inspector and the fire marshal.

13Mark Coir, Manual for the Use of Building Permits.

14Diana S. White, "Roofing for Early America" Building Early America.
Old building permits may have been transferred to an archive or historical collection. Old building permits for Detroit and Ann Arbor are held in historical collections in their respective cities. For example, in the City of Detroit permits were issued for work licenses to contractors for alterations, additions, repairs, and demolition. All the new building permits are indexed according to street address and not by owner's names. To locate a piece of property the researcher must first know the address of the structure. In Detroit, original construction was indexed but alterations, additions, and repairs only rarely.

The researcher should cross-check the information stated on the permits, keeping in mind that one or more of the following situations might have occurred in regard to a certain building:

1. Street names and numbering systems may have subsequently changed.
2. A change in description may have been made when the property was annexed to the city or the parcel of real estate was subdivided into additions.
3. More than one permit may be issued for the same building.
4. A building permit was issued, but no building was built at the time.
5. The information on the permit reflected only the original intention of the owner in regard to the building. Changes in construction made during the building process were not generally noted on the permit.

15Detroit's building permits are in Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library; Ann Arbor's building permits are in the Bentley Historical Collection, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
6. Finally, some buildings were erected without building permits. A full account of the use and history of the Detroit records is found in The Manual for the Use of Building Permits as Issued by the Fire Marshal 1880-1908, by Mark Coir.  

Public Records—State and Federal

Records of State and Federal governments often contain information about people who have lived in a house. Such information can be located in four areas: (1) census schedules, (2) military records, (3) immigration and naturalization records, and (4) records made by the Works Project Administration (WPA).

Census records include information on population, agriculture, products of industry, manufacturing, and "inquiries of special importance."

Military records furnish the veteran's place and date of birth, dates of service, area of service, type of discharge, and any land grants issued to the veteran.

Immigration and naturalization records establish the time and place when a person arrived in the United States.

The Works Project Administration (WPA) administered three projects of interest to house researchers. WPA Rural Inventory Records and Historic American Building Survey will be discussed in detail later. The third project, historical surveys, includes information on historic

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documents which may only incidentally relate to house research.  

Census Records

A federal census has been taken every ten years since 1790. Because the information contained in these census records is extensive, they may be one of the few places where basic knowledge of a person can be found. "There is probably no other single group of records in existence which contains more information about persons and families who lived during the 1800s than do the population schedules of the United State Federal Census."\(^\text{18}\) Most of the censuses are on microfilm at large libraries. (The 1890 census was destroyed by fire.) The U.S. General Service Administration issues a Census data sheet which delineates the specific kinds of material included in each Federal Census. It is entitled Census Data, 1790-1890.\(^\text{19}\)

A census of the State of Michigan was taken each ten years from 1827 until 1904 and was conducted in the years ending in four. The first census, 1827, was conducted to determine the apportionment of legislative districts in the territorial legislature. In 1850, the state legislature agreed to a more comprehensive census, and questions on population, agriculture, and manufacturing were added to the 1854 census. Each successive census questionnaire was enlarged to include qualities and value of products, capital requirements, and the number

\(^{17}\)Michigan, Historic Survey Projects of the Work Project Administration, 82 vols. (Detroit and Lansing: 1937-1942).

of persons employed in each business or activity.

The Michigan census of 1884 made an ambitious attempt to count everybody, "except for Indians not taxed." The enumerators were directed to seek out those individuals living alone, "people found in public buildings, above stores, warehouses, factories, stables, ... drygood boxes...tents, cabins, huts...(and) persons in police stations having no homes." The census had five schedules: (1) population, (2) mortality, (3) agriculture, (4) products of manufacturing, and (5) "inquiries of special importance." Inquiries of special importance covered information on libraries, schools, and churches. The 1894 census report was enlarged even more and was published in three volumes, while that of 1904, the last Michigan census, was printed in two volumes.


Military Records

Military records begin with the Revolutionary War period. They are of two types, military service records and veterans benefit records. Data in the service record include the name, dates, rank, and unit in


which a person served and may also include his personal papers. The file may also contain other information important to a house researcher, such as a bounty-land application, a granted warrant, the number of acres, and the year the grant was made.

**WPA Rural Inventory Records**

The Michigan State Tax Commission initiated a WPA project known as the Rural Inventory Records in the 1930s. The purpose of this inventory was to describe each parcel of land in every township of every county. An additional purpose of the project was to locate rural lands not then recorded on tax rolls. Towns and incorporated areas were not included in the inventory. The facts for each parcel of land were written or typed on two sides of a letter-size sheet of good quality cardboard.

This information sheet contains the names of persons to whom the taxes were assessed, the property description as copied from the tax rolls, a notation where the description on the tax roll was erroneous, and another notation if the description had been corrected. All corrections were checked against deeds, office surveys, supervisors' records, or other sources. If the property was found unlisted on tax rolls, a search for the owner or owners was started.

The most important information to be found in these records is the description of the house. It includes an estimated date of construction, a description of the heating system, the number of rooms and stories, the exterior and interior condition of the house (from
excellent to poor), and whether it had porches. There is space for an outline drawing of the house, with dimensions indicated. Another space lists adjacent roads, the number of miles to the nearest trading center, the school district, whether the property had electricity, telephone, or gas lines, and the type of water supply available.

On the reverse side of the sheet is a diagram of the owners land, its use, and its condition (from excellent to poor), a list of the main farm buildings, their types, sizes, condition and, finally, a list of all other buildings.

This is one of the most exhaustive inventories of rural areas extant and one of the best sources for researching houses in rural areas during the 1930s. Unfortunately, the records are difficult to locate, though some may be found in County Equalization Offices, Township Halls, Libraries, Historical collections, and the State Archives. The last has inventories of nearly 50 Michigan counties, but the location of the remaining inventories is unknown.

Historic Building Survey (HABS)

Another WPA project was the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), whose purpose was to measure, photograph, and preserve data on historic buildings in America. The program was begun in 1933 under the auspices of the National Parks Service in cooperation with the American Institute of Architects and the Library of Congress. The HABS survey covers four types of buildings: public, churches, houses, and other types.
Between 1933 and 1966 the HABS archives at the Library of Congress accumulated over 27,000 measured drawings, 27,000 photographs, and 6,000 pages of architectural and historic data for approximately 10,000 historic buildings throughout the country. At the time, these buildings were considered to be outstanding examples of architecture and to have historic significance. The results of Michigan's participation in this endeavor were published in *Historic American Buildings Survey: Michigan*, compiled by Harley J. McKee in 1967. This designation of Historic Building did not preserve the buildings; it merely preserved date about them.

**Private Records**

Historical records are materials of private origin, such as letters, reports, diaries, and any other material written by an individual, business, or organization. When these records are part of a historical collection, they are known as a manuscript collection.

From historical materials such as these the history of a family can be reconstructed, even to the dates the family lived in a certain house. Notes from diaries may add further knowledge about the house. For instance, one diary said, "May 8th, 1858, started to build my house," and "October 28th, 1858, House not finished." This diary, written by John C. Dillon of Barry County, also listed the materials

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used to build his house as well as the costs. An entry of March 11, 1869, reported an "inventory of articles and goods in the house at the present time." Some twenty years later, October 28, 1873, he records an auction sale listing items, sold, who bought what, and the amount paid for each item. Although this was the end of the private information, Probate Court records had two further inventories of the contents of the house, the first after he died in March, 1902, and the second after his wife died in February, 1906. It is rare to find such a complete record of a house and its contents, but the possibility is open to every house researcher.

Original documents such as those described above are called primary sources. However, when primary sources are not available, the researcher must turn to secondary sources. Some of the most helpful secondary sources are published county histories, which often contain general information about the county, cities, villages and townships, first settlers, elected officials, and early churches. These histories usually have a biographical section. The people listed in this section were not always prominent, for ordinary people sometimes paid to have their biographies published and some even had lithographs of their farms and farmhouses included. The biographies

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22Manuscript collection, file No. A556, Box 2, WMU Archives and Regional History Collection, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

23Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff, The Modern Researcher (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970) define sources as "primary source is distinguished from a secondary source by the fact that the former gives the words of the witness or first record of an event, while a historian using a number of such primary sources, produces a secondary source."
contain the dates when a family arrived in the area, the names and number of children, and sometimes even the date when they moved into their "big house." Often individuals mentioned in the histories provide clues to the present whereabouts of descendants of the original owners. Since many families live in the same area for generations, locating them often helps to locate others who can aid in reconstructing the history of the house.

The illustration in these local histories are valuable pictorial records. Lithographs of the 1890s and photographs of the early 1900s are excellent source materials. Some lithographs in the histories of the 1880s show both the original cabin and the "substantial" new house.\textsuperscript{24} Photography in area histories of the 1900s and later are an accurate visual source material.

County, city, and area histories, whether published or private, very widely in authenticity or accuracy. Hence essential information, including the spelling of names, should be verified from a primary source before use. However, such histories often provide clues for further research. Should the house being researched resemble the illustration in the book, it is likely to be a portrait of the house in its prime.

Old photograph studios may have original negatives or glass plates of their work. Many times independent photographers provided commercial publishers with photographs to illustrate their books. If the

\textsuperscript{24}On occasion a house may be illustrated while in fact it was never actually built.
publisher was promoting a town, the book contained street views of houses, and one can spot individual houses in most of these photographs.

Newspapers were the earliest chronicles of a community. They contained tidbits of interesting and often important news. Items such as "John Smith built a new house" or "Mr. Striker has erected one of the finest residences in the city" are examples of the vital information that can be found in newspapers. Between 1900 and 1920 newspapers frequently published as legal notices transfers of land, stating the names of the parties and the real estate involved. All newspapers have carried obituaries, probate and other notices, and advertisements of public sale of real estate and personal property.

City directories and telephone books are examples of business publications.²⁵ City directories are usually indexed both by names of persons and by street addresses.

Insurance agencies or their parent companies have records of persons who insured their houses against loss, beginning with the period of construction. Fairly accurate descriptions of the type of house being insured are found in these records. Materials mentioned are the kinds of roofs, siding, fireplaces if any, types and number of chimneys, and the current value of the house at the time the policy was written.

Civic, business, church and other social organizations such as

²⁵ City directories were published for commercial use; their purpose was not to serve as historical documents.
service clubs often have information about families, some of whom may live in the house a researcher is working on. Many of these organizations maintain lists of members with their names and addresses and publish their own histories or yearbooks with extensive facts about their members. By finding these sources the researcher can learn still more about the people who live in the house he is studying.

The researcher can also obtain books, pamphlets, leaflets, newsletters, and magazines from national organizations which will assist in his investigation. These materials may help to answer some of the questions that commonly arise in documenting houses. Their addresses appear in the bibliography of this paper.

The American Association for State and Local History, founded in 1940, is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to advancing knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of local history in the United States and Canada. Its monthly publication History News includes a technical leaflet. The association issues a catalog of books relating to the documentation of houses, sent to the researcher on request.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation was chartered by Congress in 1966 "to further the national policy of preserving for public use America's heritage of historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects; to facilitate public participation in the historic preservation movement and to serve that movement through educational and advisory programs; and to accept and administer for public benefit and use significant historic properties." The National Trust for Historic Preservation Act of 1966.
publishes Preservation News, a quarterly journal, and a monthly newsletter along with a catalog of preservation books. Many of the books pertain to the documentation of houses.

Old Houses Journal: Renovation and Maintenance Ideas for the Old House is a monthly magazine presenting articles on the documentation of houses. An exceptional series on the architecture of old houses has appeared in the magazine.
CHAPTER IV

Cartographic Records

Cartographic materials are maps, charts, diagrams, and surveys produced by governmental agencies, corporate bodies, and individuals.27 The specific types of cartographic material helpful to a house researcher are cadastral,28 land use, military, political, original land surveys, and economic land surveys. The forms of maps are manuscript or hand drawn, printed, photoprocessed, and annotated.29

In several governmental agencies and private concerns cartography is an essential function. The house researcher will be interested in the following federal agencies: Army Map Service, Coast and Geodetic Survey, Bureau of the Census, General Land Office, Forest Service, and Soil Conservation. State and local governments produce maps pertaining to political units of governments, transportation, economic land surveys, original land surveys, plats, waterways, and recreation.

Private corporations publish maps for purposes of education, promotional use, transportation, and recreation. They also publish cadastral maps such as atlases and plat books.

Cadastral maps contain the most pertinent information for the house researcher. They provide a point of departure. The earliest

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27Map refers to land area; chart to water or air.
28Cadastral: a map indicating the extent and ownership of land.
29Schellenberg, Management of Archives, p. xv.
Michigan county land ownership maps are of the 1850s and 1860s. They are wall maps, five to six feet square, and show political and property boundaries, the names of property owners (if in the township), roads, villages, factories, mills, schools, and churches. Often inserted village maps indicate every house in the village with a black square. Village lots can be located by streets, and the original village lot numbers, which are the legal description of the lots, are listed on some of the maps. Beside this inset map is usually found a business directory.

Atlases are bound books of maps covering such areas as the world, a state, county, or city. A county atlas is the appropriate place to examine early landowners' records. Each township map lists the landowner's name and the acreage on his portion of land. Maps of the cities, villages, and incorporated areas appear at the back of the atlas. Sometimes there are illustrations as well as historical and biographical sections. Atlases of the 1870s and 1880s contain lithographs; those beginning in the 1890s contain photographs.

Map information is the visual placement of a house on a lot. Houses can be easily located on maps for rural areas; they are indicated by a black square or by the notation "res" (residence). Data from maps are recorded on the house inventory sheet. The data will assist the researcher in fixing a time period to be searched for further documentation. The researcher should examine each map, beginning with the earliest, and record the map's name, date, publisher, and when a house appears on the map. When all maps are examined and data recorded, the researcher should have a point of departure and possible
Maps only indicate what a cartographer observed at the time a map was constructed. Events occurring after construction of a map challenge the researcher's accurate interpretation of the map. For example, it was not uncommon in the early days for houses to be moved to another site. Among ninety houses studied in Hastings, seven were identified as not on their original building sites and several others are believed to be not the first house built on the lot. A house indicated on an early map may have burned, been torn down or moved elsewhere and replaced by a new house or another house. Thus the house indicated on a map is not always the same house a researcher is trying to document.

The rate of error in map-making should be kept in mind by the researcher. In a recent experiment on map-making errors it was determined that all hand-drawn maps have an error rate of at least 5% and birds-eye maps have an error rate of up to 26%. Until maps were photographically produced, numerous errors occurred. The most common error was omission of a house. This was true for smaller houses; larger houses were always illustrated.

"Plat books" are really paper-covered county atlases. First issued in the 1920s, they are still the form of plat books published today. Included with the township sites are local advertisements and an index of owners. Their research value is greatest for rural properties but they are also useful when a former rural property has been

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30Oliver Zung of the University of Michigan performed the experiment for the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit, Michigan.
Plat books are commercial enterprises and are misnamed because they do not contain maps for recorded plats.

Plat maps as distinguished from "plat books" refer to the original maps showing recorded subdivisions of land and giving the legal description of the land. These maps are filed with the County Register of Deeds and the Office of the Great Seal of Michigan. Copies of the earlier maps are kept in the State Archives.

Other maps relevant to house research are the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, which have been published since 1885. They map central business districts and factories for insurance companies, but they also show residential housing when it is adjacent to commercial areas. Lot and house numbers are indicated on the maps, but the numbers may be Sanborn's own system and will say "house number arbitrary." These maps have scaled drawings of houses and buildings, keyed in color. The color key represents the type of construction, whether frame, stone, or brick. Other keys indicate porches, window shutters, cornices of wood or metal, and various kinds of roofing material. Types of lighting systems and heating systems used in the commercial buildings, as well as a wealth of other related data, are included on the maps. Sanborn maps have not been published or updated on a regular schedule, but Sanborn does provide cutouts of buildings or sections to be affixed over the old ones. Photocopies of the original maps can be ordered from the National Archives' map division.

"Birds-eye" maps are panoramic views of a city drawn to look as they would if the viewer were airborne—hence "birds-eye." These will
be discussed under lithographs.

Since 1896 the United States Geological Survey has issued topographical maps showing the terrain or physical features of the land. While they were originally drawn to scale from actual measurements, today they are made from aerial photographs. Each map is known as a "quadrangle" and covers part of a county; several quadrangles encompass a whole county. The land and all man-made improvements on it are clearly visible. These maps are becoming increasingly valuable to researchers. A set is kept at the State Library, complete except for three sheets.

Great Lakes Survey charts, sometimes show structures along the shores of the lakes, such as lighthouses, cottages, marinas, and ports. The State Library has the charts from 1860 to the present, and of the whole series only twenty or thirty sheets are missing.

Other maps the house researcher might examine are internal improvement maps. County road commissions, railroads, and canal and waterway commissions make maps of their projects for their own use. While these maps may be hard to find, they can often be of great value.

Houses within military installations such as old forts may be discovered on maps found in the National Archives. Also, houses on or near federal Indian reservations may be identified on maps in the National Archives.

A list of major Michigan bibliographical map reference sources is included in the bibliography at the end of this paper.
There are three general types of pictorial records: original art, photographs, and reproductions of these. More precisely, as T.R. Schellenberg says, the "specific types are photographic prints and negatives, paintings and drawings, lithographs, etchings, and the like." 31

Lithographs, prints, and the drawings found in histories of an area and in promotional materials of railroads, tourist associations, and chambers of commerce are often quite helpful to the house researcher. They may show both the old house or cabin and the new house. Occasionally the drawing of the "new" house may have been only a fanciful wish of the property owner, but it usually shows the house as it was originally built.

Birds-eye view maps have drawings of early houses which, while not to scale, are accurate enough to be recognizable. The researcher should be aware that these maps sometimes enlarged the more prestigious houses while diminishing in size or omitting entirely the smaller houses.

If the house illustrated resembles in configuration and size the house now on the land and the other documentary evidence concurs, the

researcher can be reasonably sure it is the same house. However, a
drawing of a house necessarily embodies the artist's interpretation
A good artist may give an authentic rendering, but "the only accurate
drawings are the architect's renderings." 32

Photographs provide more accurate pictorial records of both ex­terior and interior views. The best are those which can be identi­fied; if they are not accompanied by textual material they are diffi­cult to date. Comparison, internal evidence, printed evidence such as appears on postcards, and the type of photograph under study are used in dating photographs. Collection, Use and Care of Historic Photographs, an excellent research book on photographs, describes how to identify individual pictures. "An unidentified photograph can be compared to similar images. The terrain, other buildings, road con­ditions help to establish the time frame....Equally valuable can be precise details of building construction, for example: wood versus brick, or sawn lumber versus logs, open windows or shutters. Any such clear information can assist in pinning down an accurate date or a confirmed identification." The last advise given was knowing the chronology of the history of photography is an aid to identification. 33

32 Linda Ellsworth, The History of a House (AASLH technical leaflet No. 89, Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History.)

Knowing the type of photograph and the period it was popular aids in dating a photograph of a house. The four common historic types of photographs are the daguerreotype, ambrotype, ferrotype, and the photograph made from a negative. Each of the first three "was a unique image, the image coming directly from the camera without having to be printed from an intermediate negative." The daguerreotype, invented about 1839 and popular until the 1860s, was a silver-mercury image on a thin sheet of silver-plated copper. Usually daguerreotypes were of persons and thus pictures of houses are rare. The ambrotype was patented in 1854 and was in popular use until the 1880s. It was a wet collodion negative on glass with a backing of black paper, cloth, or black paint, which made the negative image appear positive when viewed with reflected light. The ferrotype or "tintype," which became popular about 1856, was made of black japanned sheet iron coated with collodion, sensitized, then exposed in the camera. Technically, a tintype was a modification of an ambrotype, the difference being that the tintype used sheet iron instead of glass.

All three types were usually placed in hinged presentation cases because the images were very fragile and easily scratched. The cases were made of leather, gutta-percha, or paper. Photographs found outside such cases are often in extremely poor condition.

The photograph as we recognize it today is a print made from a negative. This process was invented in 1851 and has been further

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34 Ibid., p. 154.
developed down to the present. One of the earliest types was the card-board-mounted photograph known as the "burnished albumen print," which was popular from 1855 to the 1890s. Albumen paper was paper coated with egg whites and sodium chloride. To make a print, the photographer placed a sheet of albumen paper in contact with a negative. The picture was made in various sizes, ranging from $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches to $6-7/8$ by $9-7/8$ inches. This is the kind of photographs from which the first postcards were made.

Most photographs of houses were taken in the 1890s and later, after the box camera became popular. It was this camera which made photography simple enough for almost anyone to take pictures.

House researchers, and especially house restorers, hunt quite diligently for old pictures to document a house because they show exactly how the house looked when it was built.
CHAPTER VI

Architectural Style

Determining the architectural style of a house can aid the house researcher in dating its construction. In general, an architectural style is a formal style or a vernacular style. The formal style is the most accurate and correct rendition of a style possible, while the vernacular style reflects a simplified, regional adaptation of the formal style.

An architectural style is one that was popular during a certain period of time and had distinctive features that set it apart from all others. However, the popularity of architectural styles overlapped in time, so that four or five different styles could be in vogue during the same period. Two books, Identifying American Architecture and American Architecture Since 1780, are recommended to the researcher trying to date a house. These books analyze formal styles and contain illustrations of houses that are the best examples of a specific formal style.

Definitions of architectural terms appear in the glossary of this paper.

Formal Styles

The thirteen formal architectural styles most commonly found in Michigan are discussed briefly below, in the order in which they were popular from the earliest period to the present. They are Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Villa, Octagon, Romanesque, Queen Anne, Shingle, Stick, Half-Timber, Colonial Revival, Bungalow, and Ranch.

Greek Revival: 1820-1860

The Greek Revival style was sparked by a romantic interest with all things Greek. The American version of a Greek temple is not a pure architectural copy. It is an adaptation of that temple incorporating details of the Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian orders. "The Greek Revival style is a low pitched roof with the gable end usually facing the street. The gable end is made up of a full or broken pediment with an entablature serving as the base of the triangular gable end... The entablature is supported by pilasters at each corner of the house."37

While a colossal temple front porch was a common feature of houses in the southern United States, Michigan house builders more often favored the flat pilasters. A rectangular transom over the door was a popular feature and often was broken by two engaged piers flanked by sidelights of glass panels on both sides of the door. "Windows were double-hung sashes with two rows of three panes in both upper and lower

Figure 1


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sash. This is commonly known as "6 over 6 panels." Each window on a
side of the house is balanced either with another window or with a door,
presenting a very symmetrical appearance.

The main structure is one or two stories high. What appears to
be a second story window under the eaves may be a "stomach window," a
small window approximately two feet square, between the roof eaves and
the floor. It is so-called because a person had to lie on his stomach
to look out the window.

The house was built of wood, brick, or stone. It had a braced or
timber frame structure made of hand-hewn or machine-sawed timbers
measuring 8 x 8 inches or 12 x 12 inches in thickness. (Figure 2)
The frame consisted of posts, sills, and diagonal braces reinforcing
each corner. All of these timbers were joined together with mortice-
and tendon-pegged joists. The exterior of the wood frame was covered
with narrow horizontal clapboard siding.

Greek Revival houses had an original foundation made of rubble
stone. A.J. Downing describes the typical rubble stone foundation
thus: "The walls...are 20 inches or 2 feet thick and built of any
rough rubble or field stone, laid up without hammering, on a random
course and then plastered." The foundation varied from 18 inches
depth to a depth of seven to eight feet. In an 1874 book, Homes and
How to Make Them, the directions for building a basement were given
as follows: "Bring the largest rocks that can be loosened by power

39Ibid., p. 78.
Figure 240


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Figure 2

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or dragged by oxen...huge flat rocks of one or two yards area and six to twelve inches thick are best... The gaps between the huge rock to be filled in with smaller rocks or pebbles using a lime mortar to bind them.\(^4\) If a Greek Revival house is sitting on such a foundation, the researcher can be sure it is the original foundation. Occasionally but not often the original foundation was brick.

**Gothic Revival**

The Gothic Revival style emphasizes vertical lines. Its distinguishing features are gables, steep roofs, pointed arches, lancet windows, and vertical siding. Another outstanding feature of the style is the extension of the roof rafters two feet out from the house. "On the sides, the rafters are continued out to support the eaves, and on the gable end, short pieces are fitted in to support the sheathing of the roof and give unity of effect."\(^4\) Sometimes this roof detail is the only portion which has not been remodeled on a Gothic Revival house.\(^4\)

The frame of the house was constructed of wood, brick, or (rarely) stone. This style of house was one of the first to use the balloon frame. (Figure 3) A balloon frame was a "readily constructed cage of slender plates and studs...running the entire length and height of


\(^4\)Downing refers to this style as his "bracketed cottage" design.
Figure 344

Ibid., p. 199.
the building and held together only by nails... This logical method of construction was an impossibility until the Industrial Age produced mechanically sawn lumber and...mass-produced nails."  

The foundation was built of rubble stone, brick, or cut stone. The roof was originally covered with wood shingles or slate.  

**Italianate: 1840-1880**

"Italianate style refers to any house or commercial building that combines Italian style shapes and details."  

The Italianate style is a block form and has symmetrical shape. It may be rectangular in shape, but the visual effect is one of smaller cubes joined to a larger box. For instance, wings appear as cubes attached to either side of the house. The roof is a low-pitched hip roof with a cupola, which may not have survived. Roofs were covered with tin plate, an all-American roofing material.  

Windows on the first floor are tall and narrow. Above the doors and windows are "four characteristic arches: semi-circular, straight, straight-sided and flat-topped...they are all keystone..."  

The frame is a braced frame, occasionally a balloon frame. The exterior siding is wood, brick, and sometimes stone. There are wide

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47 Diane White, "Roofing for Early America," Building Early America, p. 141.


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Italian Villa 1835-1885

Vernacular Italianate 1865-1885

Figure 49

eaves supported by large brackets. The front door may have a glass panel, the first appearance of such a panel in American architecture.

**Villa: 1840-1880**

"The Villa style - of which there are two types, Italian and Tuscan - derives from farmhouses and villas built in Italy during the Renaissance."\(^{50}\) The Italian Villa incorporates the same style as the Italianate, but it was more elaborate and was built "for the man of wealth," as Downing observed.\(^{51}\) Italian Villa is asymmetrical, has an added tower, with an "L" or "T" shaped floor plan. The Tuscan Villa is symmetrical, with a belvedere or cupola centered atop the roof. Usually these villas are constructed of stone or brick, with a foundation of the same composition. An asymmetrical house may have a low gable roof instead of the hip roof. The windows have heavy architraves and are designed in groups of three. These houses often have verandahs or porches. They may have either a braced frame or a balloon frame structure, but it is generally a braced frame covered with brick. The foundation is cut stone or occasionally rubble stone.

**Octagon: 1850-1860**

The Octagon style is constructed with eight, ten or twelve sides

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\(^{50}\) Conley, "Italian Style," p. 1.

Figure 5-2

to the house and is two to four stories high. The roof is low pitched and has a cupola or roof deck. The Octagon has a raised basement, encircling porches, and minimal decorative trim. The trim may resemble Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, or Italianate design. The house may be constructed of wood, stone, brick, or concrete. Orson Fowler, a phrenologist, utilized the Octagon in the first major attempt in America to build a concrete house. Fowler describes this innovation and others, including inside bathroom with toilets, in his book.

Octagon houses were built only during a ten-year period from 1850 to 1860, then lost favor to a more conventional style of house. However, the octagon concept was successfully adapted to barns and was used until the 1920s.

Romanesque: 1850-1890

Romanesque style is a medieval design. The distinguishing features are a massive, fortress-like appearance and semi-circular arches over the doors and windows. Generally, there are one or two towers on the front of the house. Where there are two towers, they are not of the same height. Cut granite stone is used for the foundation as well as for the exterior walls. On a rare occasion the walls are constructed of brick. The style was not common in Michigan until the late 1880s, and even then a Romanesque house was built only for the wealthy.

53 The word "Octagon" was used to refer to all three types of houses.  
Queen Anne 1875–1900

Stick Style 1875–1900

Bungalow 1900–1930

Shingle Style 1885–1900

Figure 655

Old House Compendium, p. 12, 14.
Queen Anne: 1870-1900

The Queen Anne style is marked by its irregular and asymmetrical design. It was inspired by and adapted from medieval English castle architecture. It resembles the Gothic Revival design in the return of gables, multilevel steep roofs, and ornamental trim. However, it goes beyond the Gothic in its flamboyant use of a variety of forms, textures, materials, and color. The exterior is wood and is decorated with stick, shingle, or (Eastlake) style ornamentation. Decorative shingles, elaborate barge boards, turned spindles, finials and pendants, and carved wood panels cover the exterior and interior of the house. Ornamental terra cotta panels decorate the chimneys.

"Architectural parts include towers, turrets, tall chimneys, projecting pavilions, porches, bays, and encircling verandahs." There seemed to be no restraint on the architects. Whatever man could architecturally conceive was designed into these houses. Windows are variously set into dormers and bays, are pedimented, and are designed into beveled corners. Window glass is cut, leaded, clear, or stained.

Original foundations were cut stone or brick. As these houses were some of the largest houses ever constructed in Michigan, most if not all are still on the original site and foundation. All frame structures are of balloon construction. Roofs are covered with multicolored slates laid in patterns. Other roofing materials are tile or

wood shingle.

Queen Anne houses are dubbed "the houses of lumber barons" because of their extensive and lavish use of lumber.

**Shingle Style and Stick Style: 1870-1900**

Shingle style and stick style are decorative variants of the Queen Anne style. A shingle house has shingles on a portion of the exterior, or over the entire exterior, of the house. The shingles may appear on the upper stories of a house while stone or horizontal siding is used on the first story. The shingle style is sometimes used with the stick style.

Stick style is the use of wide flat vertical, horizontal, or diagonal boards applied over the horizontal siding for architectural ornamentation. Oversized and unornamental structural corner posts and railing give a heavy, solid appearance to the house. This aspect is in direct contrast with the delicate, lacy vertical impression of the Gothic Revival.

**Colonial Revival: 1890-1930**

Colonial Revival style is a conscious effort to duplicate colonial architecture, but the proportions are not faithful to the original design. The house is taller and the roof has a steeper pitch. The ornamentation is exaggerated and the brackets under the eaves are squared.

Colonial Revival, Mission, Georgian Revival, or neo-colonial houses make use of the same floor plans but have different exteriors.
Colonial Revival 1885-Present

Tudor Revival 1885-Present

Figure 757

57Ibid., p. 15.
These buildings are square or rectangular in plan, with a minimum of projections. All have symmetrical facades.

Colonial Revival roofs are hipped, double pitched, or gambrel. Chimneys are placed so as to contribute to the overall symmetry. Windows are double-hung single panes sashes, with plate glass which may be beveled. There may also be leaded, clear, or stained glass windows in an oriel or bay. The foundations are cut stone or brick. Roofs are covered with slate or asbestos shingles.

**Half-Timber: 1900-1930**

Half-timber, sometimes known as English Tudor, style houses have a first-story exterior of stucco, stone, concrete, or masonry and a second-story exterior of timber frame filled in with brick or mortar. The combination gives the house a contrast of light and dark. The roof is steep-pitched and covered with slate or wood shingles. Windows are small diamond-shaped panes of glass in a double-hung sash. Chimneys are an integral part of the design and are embellished with ornamental tops. The house foundations are cut stone or brick.

A full-timber house has the same timber framework on the first story as on the second story. The timbers are used for ornamental design and are not a structural part of the house.

**Bungalow: 1900-1930**

The bungalow style house is one-story or one-and-a-half story design. It has broad gables and a low gable roof with square brackets.
The roof ridge beams and purlins extend beyond the walls to the edge of the roof. The roof design may contain cross gables or dormers, and the entire roof may be covered with tile. Other roofing materials used are wood or asbestos shingles. Chimneys, made of brick or stone, are built on the exterior of the house. Small windows flank the chimney. Windows are either single pane in a double-hung sash or casement with many panes. Porches have battered piers, and porch walls are sometimes faced with wood shingles. The porches may be enclosed. The whole house may be shingles and may have a flared or battered base at the foundation. Other exterior sidings are stucco, narrow clapboard, or brick. The foundations are made from cut stone, brick, or concrete. These houses sometimes appear to have an oriental look.

Ranch: 1940-Present

Ranch style has a predominantly horizontal look which is reinforced by the exterior siding, windows, and sliding glass doors. The exterior presents a clean visual sweep and is devoid of ornamentation. It is generally a single story house, but it has two stories. It may have projecting or cantilevered balconies. The exterior siding may be of wood, brick veneer, concrete, or aluminum siding. The roof is low-pitched or flat and there is an absence of cornices or projecting eaves. The roof is covered with asbestos shingles or a combination of roofing paper covered with tar and then stones.

A major innovation in the Ranch style is the use of reinforced concrete, which is used for slab flooring, foundations, and exterior walls.
LOW, sweeping roof lines tend to give this house a ground-hugging effect. This is characteristic of Ranch House design.

1940 - Present

Figure 8


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Vernacular Style

Vernacular style architecture is a variant of a formal style. Certain characteristics define it, chief among them is the simplicity of execution. It has an "openess and flexibility" in its adaptation of the formal design.\textsuperscript{59} Vernacular Architecture is "concerned...only with the shape, arrangement, and accommodation of the building, not with modes and style of exterior finish."\textsuperscript{60} The style emerged from the desire of unschooled artisans to "create satisfying patterns out of the elements of their environment."\textsuperscript{61}

Each region in America created its own vernacular architecture, which reflected its climate, the available materials and tools, and the artisan's skill in adapting drawings from plan books. A vernacular style house of even simple styling is difficult to identify. No existing reference books will cover all the variations. If a vernacular house has been remodeled, the identification process becomes more complicated. It is then important for the researcher to obtain details of the physical structure of the building from available documentary sources. Other research in depth can be done by utilizing old house-plan books and builders magazines of the period involved.

Some house plan books, pattern books, and style books were avail-


\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., p. 70

\textsuperscript{61}Ibid., p. 15.
able to builders in this country before 1776. They were about English architecture and were published in England, but soon found their way to American builders. The first American book on American architecture was Benjamin's *The Country Builders Assistant*, published in 1779. It was a pattern plan book, a practical volume of house building. "Asher Benjamin wrote seven books on architecture and building construction, that found wide acceptance over a fifty year period." His sixth book, *The American Builders Companion*, has been reprinted by Dover Publishing Co. It is a classic resource on vernacular architecture. "It insured a high degree of design, competence and stylistic sophistication (to the rural architect and builder) that might not have otherwise occurred," stated Ms. Flaherty in *Old House Journal*.

All the plan books published after Asher Benjamin's book in 1779 had the same purpose. They made available to the rural builder more sophisticated plans than he could devise by himself. A.J. Downing published two well-known books *Cottage Residences* in 1847 and *The Architecture of Country Houses* in 1850.

Downing's books provided designs for houses for persons on various economic levels. For example, there are chapters on the design of simple one-room and two-room cottages for a common working man.

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64 *Ibid.*

65 *Architecture of Country Houses* is reprinted by Dover Publishing Co.
Other designs progressed to the Villa for "the person of competence or wealth." The books also included many pages of "practical suggestions." Once a chapter was devoted to the interior and exterior finishing of houses and contained a color chart for the exterior finish.

Still another chapter described furniture to be used in the house. A final and interesting chapter gave an explanation of central heating by the use of hot air and hot water furnaces and an explanation of a method to pipe water to the second story.66

Old plan books that have been preserved provide insight into the construction methods used at various periods. Reprints of old plan books are available for each decade since 1840, at least one for each decade, and are being reprinted each year.

Some of the more popular reprints are The Octagon House (1850) by Orson Fowler, reprinted by Dover; Woodward's Country Homes (1865) and Victorian Architecture and Rural Arts (1867-1868) by George Woodward, both reprinted by The American Life Foundation; The Victorian Village Builders (1872) by A.J. Bicknell, reprinted by American Life Foundation; Palliser's Late Victorian Architecture (1888) by George and Charles Palliser, reprinted by the American Life Foundation in 1978; and Craftsman's Homes, (1909) by Gustav Stickley, reprinted by Dover Publishing Co. in 1979.

The house researcher will find plan books useful in dating a vernacular house. The books contain simple designs suited for such

houses. More importantly, the books give a chronological account of the development and adoption of the innovative construction techniques discussed by the authors. By tracing a new development, the researcher can determine when the knowledge was first available. A new technique was not incorporated into a vernacular house until it had been discussed and builders were satisfied that it reduced construction costs. For example, balloon framing was readily adopted by builders because it was a less expensive method of construction. In 1865, George Woodward described the use of balloon frame construction: "The balloon frame has, for more than twenty years, been before the building public." Woodward explained the reason builders should use it: "A man and boy can now attain the same results, with ease, that twenty men could on an old fashioned frame."^67

After Downing introduced central heating and conveying water to the second story and Fowler showed the practicability of inside toilets, the authors of plan books of the 1870s and 1880s assumed that the builders were going to include central heat, ample closets, bathrooms with running hot and cold water, and kitchens with ice boxes and stoves. The plan books were intended to assist middle-class persons in the design and building of homes, incorporating the latest conveniences.

Plan books provided architectural guidance to a vast market. They addressed the public directly by distributing the latest avail-

able designs. The books included the names and addresses of the originators, from whom interested persons could purchase the plans. The books contained specifications for construction and sometimes the estimated cost of construction. They also included specific additional plans for gates, posts, fences, and designs for the exterior of doors, windows, and trim. They often carried designs for interior wood uses such as mantels, trims, moldings, and furniture. Several firms acted as clearing houses for architectural publications and sold correspondence courses in architecture. While they were written for the general public, the earliest books recommended engaging an architect to do the actual work. Later on firms sold plans without such recommendations.

George and Charles Palliser were the first to offer mail order architectural plans, but numerous other firms followed their lead.

The period 1880-1890 is the only decade for which there are no reprinted plan books. The house researcher, however, has access to original books and builders magazines of that period.

Architectural builders' magazines are another resource for the researcher in determining architectural style. "Before the 1870s the publication of architectural drawings was generally limited to pattern books. With the introduction of many periodicals in the 1870s the drawings of buildings and details assumed major importance. 68 Magazines which published such drawings were: American Architect and

Building News, Inland Architect, Western Architect, Builder and Woodworker, Carpentry and Building, and Craftman. The latter three also published plans for vernacular or inexpensive houses. Each month Carpentry and Building published one house plan together with practical suggestions for its construction. Recent innovations in construction and information about new building tools and methods were included.

Other sources of plans and designs can be found in women's magazines and books of the period. In some magazines, Better Homes and Gardens, Ladies Home Journal and Women's Home Companion, house designs were a regular monthly feature. In other magazines house designs appeared intermittently or once a year. Newspapers featured plans for house designs, usually in their Saturday or Sunday issues.

Books written for women often carried house plans, emphasizing the functions of housekeeping. The famous author Harriet Beecher Stowe and her sister Catherine Beecher wrote a chapter on house design and plans in their book American Women's Home, published in 1870. All women's books discussed the importance of cleanliness and sanitation, the arrangement of house plans for the efficient use of women's time, and new decorations and modern conveniences to be incorporated in the house. By reading these, a researcher can determine the plans and working arrangements that were acceptable for middle-class women. These publications were not intended for the well-to-do but for middle-class. The house illustrations reflect the vernacular design more accurately than most style books.

69 Ibid., p. 40.
Although vernacular structures seldom contain all the elements of a formal style, they often contain sufficient clues to indicate a building's derivation from a particular style or styles. These indicators include scale, proportions, massing height, shape and floor plan, roof lines, types of construction materials and finishes, textures, color, porches, and entrances, columns, towers, chimneys, windows, and doors, molding around doors, windows and cornices, decorations, and even landscaping. Interior clues can be determined by the same kind of examination. Construction methods, the bonding of brick, foundation construction, and framing techniques are excellent clues to the age of a building.

Old House Journal warns the researcher who tries to date a house solely by its physical appearance: "A common error made in looking for age clues in the style of a house is to try to make a determination based on the entire physical mass. This approach overlooks the fact that very few old houses stand exactly the way they were built. Over the years, various improvements are made."

"The (dating) key lies in studying such details in the house: windows, doors...chimneys, rooflines, siding, and interior woodwork. The styling and combination of many of these elements can give age clues to within ten years."

70 Clem Labine, "How to Research and Date Your Old House" Old House Journal, 4:1 (October 1976)

71 Ibid., 4:10.
The researcher should not draw any conclusions from a single piece of evidence but should try to date as many details as possible, then the patterns will develop.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., p. 11.
CHAPTER VI

Case Studies

In general, the procedure to document a house is to locate, examine, and record information from as many sources as possible. The compilation of the worksheets becomes the summary for the documentation. Usually a house construction date will be deduced from information on the worksheets. Only occasionally will the exact date of house construction be fixed by the research. Most of the time the date will be an inferred date. When all the information is placed on the worksheet the inferred date is possible. At this point the history of the house and its occupants can be written.

To document houses different procedures are followed depending on the available information and the purposes for dating. Two cases illustrate how the purposes and methods differ.

Case #1: 333 W. Green

Purpose: To determine the construction date and the original family that lived in the house.

What Is Known: 333 W. Green is a two-story frame Queen Anne stick style house. The legal description for the house is known, lot 872 of the City of Hastings. Using the house inventory sheets, the recorder lists all the known information. Assuming the house is indeed a Queen Anne style, the dates of 1870-1890 are chosen for the first search period. A local historian is working on the project and informs
the researcher that an important industrialist lived in the house in the 1900s and his daughter still lives in town. The name and address of the daughter are provided. The lead is a valuable one. The daughter confirms that the house was owned by her father, Emil Tyden, and they lived there from around 1900 to about 1910 or 1915. The house was not new when they bought it and the daughter thinks the house was purchased from a Minnie Messer. The daughter also was sure the exterior of the house had not been remodeled.

The local historian referred to above gave important information. Researchers should seek out the local historians of the area. Local historians can be located by inquiries at the local library, the local newspapers, city and county offices, the post office (in small towns) as well as used book stores. Often people working in these places will know people who have a keen interest in and knowledge of local history. In every locality there is at least one private collector of local history material. County historical societies members are often local historians. Sometimes there are organizations of collectors of books, postcards, or similar items. Any of these people can give the researcher leads for further research.

What is not known about 333 W. Green is the current owner of the property. The house is now a rental property with two separate apartments. It has recently been sold and the occupants do not know the new owners. If the residence was recently sold the usual way of locating the owner, through the current tax rolls, will not suffice.

There is enough information to start the search. The first
place is to check the old maps. A quick look at such atlases ensures the house was not a remodeled one and possibly was built earlier. There is no indication for this house on any of the maps for Barry County or the City of Hastings. As there are no building permits for the City of Hastings until the 1950s, the researcher will start the in-depth research in the Barry County tax rolls for the City of Hastings.

Tax rolls are compiled and filed by townships. City and village tax rolls appear at the back of the township rolls or in a separate book. Hastings in 1900 is at the back of the Hastings township records. Tax rolls are indexed by the names of the land owners. The writer should record information on the tax roll worksheet, using a broad enough time span to encompass all possibilities. (Figure 8) In this instance, since at 333 W. Green the house is known to have existed around 1900, the time span to be searched is 1870-1900. The tax roll search can begin about twenty years preceding the estimated time of construction. Tax rolls can be followed from an early date forward or from a later date backwards. The estimated time of construction for this house is 1870-1900, with an assured date of 1905 that the house existed. It is easier to date backwards on this house. 1905 is chosen for the starting point. Another lot is chosen so that there will be a lot for comparison purposes. Lot #913 is designated. It is known to be a vacant lot with no improvements. This second lot's notation need not be written down; the two are simply compared to make sure there is not an across-the-board tax increase.
TAX ROLLS WORKSHEET

Address: 333 W. Green

Legal description:

Lot 872

Style:

Queen Anne

Date of construction: 1880

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<th>Description</th>
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<th>Remarks</th>
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Figure 8

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TAX ROLLS WORKSHEET

Address: 333 W. Green

Legal description:

Lot 872

Style: Queen Anne Stick

Date of construction: 1880

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<th>Remarks</th>
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Time period to be searched from 1870 to 1900
The names Emil Tyden and the date 1905 are the first things to find in the tax rolls. Once it is established that the researcher has the proper lot, he will check every five years until the name Minnie Messer appears. 1905 shows Emil Tyden paid the taxes. 1900 shows Minnie Messer was assessed $1,900 and paid taxes of $49.91. The cross check lot 913 shows property assessments of $150 and taxes of $3.93. There certainly is a house on lot 872 in 1900. In 1895, a Minnie Greble is assessed $2,000 and pays taxes of $50.00. Because of the name change and the closeness to the architectural date of the house, the researcher decides to start the year-by-year checking of the tax rolls.

A clue to house dating may be provided when the researcher finds a sudden increase in the real property tax combined with a sudden increase in the total tax paid. A precipitous increase in the personal property tax followed the next year by a sudden increase in both the property tax and total tax is a certain sign of property improvement. This indicates to the researcher that there has been a change in the property - a house or barn has been added, perhaps a field has been put into production, or the property was sold and reassessed at a more accurate value.

Abrupt increases occurring the tax rolls must be interpreted by the researcher. Not all such increases indicate new house construction. For instance in the years 1852-53, 1879-80, and 1899 there was a reevaluation that caused a general value increase, but the total tax was not increased. Sometimes, increases and decreases in valuation
and taxes might be due to relocation of buildings; houses were frequently moved from one property to another, thus causing changes in the taxes assessed on the properties.

It was not unusual to build a larger Queen Anne style house over two or more years. The real property tax increases were gradual and occurred over the entire building period, rather than in one year. In such situations the personal property tax may increase first, indicating that there was material on site with which to build a house. The evidence would be reinforced if the personal property tax decreased the following year and the real property tax increased.

A valuation increase or a total tax increase in itself did not necessarily mean that any improvements were made to the property. The total tax increases may have occurred during periods of war, while the value of property stayed the same. None of the figures on the tax roll can be used to establish the original cost of the house, because properties were undervalued more often than they were valued at the true market value of the property.

An indication to the researcher of the impending construction of a house was the rapid change of ownership of the land. A succession of different owners in a few years meant the land was being sold for speculation. This is especially true if the land had previously been part of an estate. The fact that a person other than the owner was paying the taxes on the property could mean that the property might have been sold on land contract. Ultimately, someone would buy the vacant land and build on it.
All miscellaneous notes and remarks on the year-by-year tax roll inspection should be recorded. Such memoranda may lead the researcher to important additional information. Questions which arise in the researcher's mind should also be noted. In this instance, what is the reason for the name change from Minnie Greble to Minnie Messer? It is assumed that this is the same woman, married. This will be checked out later.

The tax rolls from 1895 to 1870 are followed back in time. The year 1892 indicates a significant change; Minnie Greble is assessed at $2,000 for value and pays taxes of $50.00. In the 1891 tax rolls there are no records for lot 872. In 1890 a Van Valkenberg owns the lots and is assessed $350 and pays taxes of $35.00. The cross-check lot of 913 is assessed $100 and $10.00 taxes. The house or a house appears to be on the lot. The search continues backwards. In 1880 John Greble owns lot 872 and four other lots. The lots are assessed at $350 and have $45.90 taxes. The cross-check lot is $100 and $3.91 taxes. The records are traced back to 1875 when Greble names first appear. In 1874 the lot 872 is assessed at $100 and has $3.71 taxes. The cross-checked lot has identical data. The house was not on the lot in 1874 but is on the lot by 1880. Now it is time to check out the names of persons appearing on the tax rolls.

Generally, if a house had vernacular styling this would be the logical point to do research to identify the style. Searching libraries, archives, and historical collections for information may consume more of the researcher's time than he spends reading the legal records.
in county offices. Foresight and planning can save precious hours of
time at the location of the search. This is especially true when the
researcher must travel far from home. A letter or telephone call to
the librarian or person in charge of the collection in advance will
enable them to locate and assemble particular books and materials for
the researcher's immediate use upon arrival.

The starting point for effective use of materials found in librar­
ies is the card catalog, which lists indexes, bibliographies, reference
dictionaries, periodical indexes, and biographical sources. The card
catalog cross-references a subject under various headings however the
researcher may have to use imaginative searching for subject headings.
For example, information about vernacular architecture may be found
under "architecture," "art," "history," "construction," "building,"
"house," or possibly other subheadings that might occur to the curious
researcher.

While it may be necessary on occasion for the researcher to re­
quest assistance from the staff, he can reasonably expect only direc­
tions to available references such as a card catalog and the location
of the materials. He should use every guide and catalog available.
All relevant facts should be noted so that a return trip is not nec­
essary to verify some seemingly insignificant fact that becomes a major
point as the research progresses.

Published histories, directories, and telephone books (for later
periods) assist in developing a biographical profile and establish the
dates when residents lived at 333 W. Green. First city directories
should be checked for the names of people and the dates their names appear on the tax rolls. For Hastings, only one city directory was available for this period, 1893. In 1893 a Mrs. Jno. Greble lived at 118 W. Green. The researcher knows that the street numbering system was changed after 1895 and the numbers are more or less 200 digits different. This brings 118 W. Green to between 320 and 340 W. Green. There was also a shift of odd and even numbers; even numbers were on the north side and odd numbers were on the south, while the current numbers are even on the south and odd on the north. This changes the number to about 329 and puts it in the same block. It can be assumed to be the same house.

Published histories are investigated for further information. Two of them yield information on former occupants of this house. These books are recorded on the reference sheets and the findings are written down. (Figure 9)

Caution is advised in the use of published portraits and biographical albums because they have a high rate of error. First names, last names, transposition of names, and the spelling of names and dates of events should be cross-checked for accuracy. The names to be checked are Greble and Messer. The Portrait and Biographical Album of 1891 has a biographical sketch on John Greble. It mentions his two children, one daughter Belle married to a Van Valkenberg, and a son Fred. It also mentions John's having been married twice. His first wife's name was Carrie and his second wife's name was Minnie. It also said, "He purchased a lot and built a large commodious house on Green Street,
REFERENCE MATERIAL WORKSHEET

FOR 333 W. Green

Published material:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication Date</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portrait &amp; Biographical Album</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td></td>
<td>600-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise Potter</td>
<td>Green St. in Late 1890s</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings:

Portrait & Biographical Album - pg. 600-601
Mention of house on Green Street, two children, two wives, extensive write up.

Green Street - pg. 5
Mention of Emil Tyden on Green Street.

City Directories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 9

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where he resided...until his death in 1891. This sketch answers some of the questions about the names on the tax rolls and suggests that the next step in the research is to check the names on the population schedules and the vital records. Some researchers would stop at this point and report the date of construction for the house was between 1875 and 1880. But this case study includes a history of the original family of the house. So the search is continued in the population schedules. (Figure 10)

The population census will give the names, ages, and sometimes the relationships to the head of the household. This needs to be understood in order to search in the vital records of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. It is especially important before Probate Court records are studied. The population census worksheet covers the three known names, Greble, Tyden, and Messer. The years searched are 1860 to 1900. The census of 1890 for Michigan was destroyed by fire and no copies survived, but the population census of 1884 and 1894 can be substituted if necessary.

The census informs the researcher that the first wife died between 1870 and 1880; a closer examination gives the death date after 1871, because a son Fred is nine years old in 1880. The 1900 census reports Tyden living next door to Greble's old neighbors John Dennis and a Chester Messer is married to a Minnie Messer. They have been married five years. These dates and names agree with the names and dates on the tax rolls. Further research in marriage records does establish

---

73Portrait and Biographical Album of Barry and Eaton County 1891, p. 600.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Microfilm #</th>
<th>Dwelling</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>381/367</td>
<td></td>
<td>Greble, John Carrie</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Hardware Merchant</td>
<td>Keeps house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cantine, Carolyn</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>8/10 Green Street</td>
<td>Greble, John</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Hardware Merchant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cantine, CW</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Harrow, Nancy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>mother-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>351/355 Green Street</td>
<td>Emil Tyden Minnie</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>Name above Murril, Edgar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>426/429</td>
<td></td>
<td>Minnie</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Florance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Denis, Lena</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chester Messer</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minnie</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10

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that Minnie Greble did marry a Chester Messer.

The vital records are the next search area. Any mention of names and relationships is recorded on the vital records sheets (Figure 11) dates if not stated are estimated. Events that are known to occur out of town are noted so that the search in the local records will not be futile. Generally the indexes will give enough information for house research. After the vital records are recorded, the search is extended to the Probate Court for records of dispersal of real estate.

The probate records give the name, the executor, administrator, or guardian, the book, page and proceeding, and the dates of the first and sometimes the last transaction. Each probate file has a record number. The most important findings for house research are the wills, heirs-at-law, mention of other persons in the will, and inventory of property. (Figure 12) The interesting item in John Greble's will dated 1885 is the mention of part of the estate to go to Minnie Butler. Between 1885 and 1891 when John dies, he marries Minnie. When the estate is settled John has made his daughter Belle's husband Ira Van Valkenberg the special administrator. There is no mention of the property or of who got what. The information is extracted from the transfer of deeds to the heirs of what John owned. Another interesting item in the Probate records is the guardianship of Fred Greble, dated July 13, 1888, which lists John as holding property in common with his sister Belle. Apparently this was willed to them by their mother, who died in 1878. Fred sold the property to his father and
### VITAL RECORDS WORKSHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Births</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Liber</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Ira &amp; Belle</td>
<td>(before 1891)</td>
<td>Portrait &amp; Biographical Album</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Van Valkenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Liber</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrie Greble</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cantine)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Greble</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriages</th>
<th>Groom</th>
<th>Bride</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Liber</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fred Greble</td>
<td>Stella Rogers</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Hastings</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Greble</td>
<td>Minnie Butler</td>
<td>Marshall,MI</td>
<td>Portrait &amp; Biograph.</td>
<td>601</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ira Van Valkenberg</td>
<td>Belle Greble</td>
<td></td>
<td>Album</td>
<td>601</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divorces</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Liber</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 11
PROBATE RECORDS WORKSHEET

File number: 2091   Liber: 25   Page: 55

Type of record: Deceased   Date of event: 4/7/1891

Name: John Greble

Date of record: 4/1891

Name of administrator: Special Ira Van Valkenberg

Names of heirs-at-law:

Fred W. Greble   son
Belle Greble Van Valkenberg   daughter
Francis James   sister
Hannah Greble   mother
Minnie Greble   widow

Names of other persons mentioned:

W.W. Cantine
Minnie Butler (at time of death married to John Greble)
C.W. Cantine   mother of first wife
Carrie

Inventory of property:

real estate in the City of Hastings lots # 836-837, 862-863, 588

(note at the time of death John's name is not on 872, Belle Van Valkenberg name is listed as owner)
and it later was deeded to Fred and then to his sister Belle. (Figure 13)

So far the search has not dealt with the Register of Deeds office. Before a land transfer can be examined the owners name and the approximate date of transfer is necessary. (Figure 14)

In this case neither the names nor dates were specific enough to warrant a deed search. The tax rolls were the quickest to use. Because of the two estates that left land to both children, the land was transferred back and forth between family members. This was one of the most complicated sets of land transfers to trace. All five of the lots that John Greble bought in 1874-75 were owned at one time or another between 1888 and 1903 by various family members. The land transfer worksheets show how the lots passed from one member of the family to another. One set of lots was finally owned by his second wife and her second husband. (Figures 12 and 13)

Fortunately, most land transfer documents are not that complicated. The researcher can trace legal information on deeds by using the legal description, the owners names, and a date of transfer.

The Index to Deeds show the name of the grantor (seller) on the lefthand side of the page and the grantee (buyer) on the righthand side of the page. Information is recorded year by year until the Index is filled. Occasionally, an Index will end and another one started during the same year.

Using the Index, the researcher can trace ownership of the property backward in time to the United State government's original land grant. The house researcher should keep in mind that records of deeds
File number: 1832   Liber: 26   Page: 246
Type of record: Guardianship   Date of event: 7/13/1888
Name: Fred W. Greble
Date of record: 7/13/1888
Name of administrator: Wm. Powers
Names of heirs-at-law:   Relationship:
   John A. Greble   father
   Belle   sister

Names of other persons mentioned:

Inventory of property:
house and barn on lots 836-837 867-868 valued at $1,650
sold to John Greble Aug. 15, 1888 for $1,650

Figure 13
LAND TRANSFER WORKSHEET

Address: 333 W. Green

Legal description: Lot 872

Type of record: Deed transfers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Liber</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Greble &amp; Wife</td>
<td>7/20/1888</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>value $650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle Van Valkenberg</td>
<td>9/3/1891</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>value $3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnie Greble Messer</td>
<td>7/30/1903</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>value $3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emil Tyden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Record not copied beyond this point)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14
### LAND TRANSFER WORKSHEET

**Address:**

**Legal description:**

**Type of record:** Deed transfers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Liber</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greble, John A.</td>
<td>9/2/1891</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>Lots 836-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for widow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>867-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greble, Fred</td>
<td>10/19/1891</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle Van Valkenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greble, John</td>
<td>5/1/1891</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>506</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ira Van Valkenberg</td>
<td>4/2/1891</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>595</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>special administrator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greble, Fred &quot;Guard&quot;</td>
<td>10/12/1888</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>Lots 867-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>836-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greble, John</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 15**
are not records of houses but records of land upon which houses may or may not have existed. The Register of Deeds Office will provide the names of owners of the land, but the researcher must obtain extraneous evidence of the existence of the house. Seldom were houses standing on the land when the federal government made the original land grant.

The researcher transcribes the information from the book of deeds to the land transfer worksheet. It should be noted that the date of the land transfer and the date the document is recorded (filed) with the Register of Deeds may be different. Special situations, such as the sale of land by an estate, inheriting the land, and sale price, should be recorded in the researcher's notes. The Index book number, the liber page, and other information should always be recorded. If it is ever necessary to check back the information can be located easily.

The record of mortgages, found in the Register of Deeds office, will furnish information to the researcher. Borrowing money by using one's land as security may indicate that a house was built at the time the loan was made. However, the owner may have borrowed the money for other reasons, such as to start a business. A house may have been built long before the mortgage, or after the mortgage was obtained. In such cases more confirming evidence is needed than the fact that a mortgage was obtained.

By now a clear record of the ownership and the relationships of the families have been established. Any further information will expand the history of the house.
Rigorous research is necessary to locate records in private hands, but when found they may prove to be of exceptional value. Records to be sought are church records, material in historical society collections, and business records, as well as oral documentation. Sometimes records in private hands will go undiscovered for years.

When information is discovered in private hands, it is very important to record the location of the material, ownership, a brief notation of the kinds of material reviewed, such as diaries, letters, photographs, and scrapbooks, and whether the material was dated. (Figure 29)

Local newspapers can round out the history of a house. When the house was one of the largest in town, considerable information about the family and pictures of the house will appear. This information will likely include the names of the residents who originally built the house, subsequent residents, and any other purpose "to which the house was used." Newspapers carry legal notices relating to the house. These notices, with dates and names, will indicate research to be done in Probate Court or Circuit Court.

The procedure for newspaper search is to have exact dates and names of residents. If the search is done at the newspaper office, a "morgue" or index of people or events will be available. Otherwise a page-by-page search is done in the proper time frame. Significant periods of time in a person's life are generally highlighted in the social sections of the newspaper. Social history can be traced by events such as marriages, twenty-fifth and fiftieth wedding anniversaries,
### Manuscripts in historical collections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Article Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Collection</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Findings:

- Privately held collections:
  - **Owner of collection**: Coleman Ins. Agency
  - **Address**: 208 S. Michigan
  - **Date of examination**: April 1980
  - **Item**: Account Book 1900-1930

- **Findings**:
  - Emil Tyden, 2 story shingle frame, Lot 872, 1909
  - T.J. Potter, 333 W. Green, Oct. 9, 1913

*Figure 16*
children's marriages, and deaths. Although newspapers before the Civil war carry limited local social history, by the 1890s social history about prominent residents appears in most papers.
CASE STUDY

333 West Green

When a person observes an outstanding Victorian style house, two questions occur: "For whom was it built?" and "What were their circumstances?" Obviously, the owner had accumulated wealth. If the owner was wealthy, what were his influences, if any, upon and within the community. Such were the questions asked about 333 W. Green. Who had it built, what did he do, and how was he able to afford it.

John Greble was a salesman for a hardware store in Battle Creek, Michigan, before he moved to Hastings in 1869. He bought into a current hardware business and was associated with several partners.

Mr. Greble helped organize the Hastings City Bank and owned shares in the three major industries of the town, the furniture factory, the whip factory, and the chair and table factory. These associations put him in contact with the major financiers of Hastings. His obituary confirms this. "In his death, Hastings loses one of the best and most successful business men."^74

Mr. Greble had wide social affiliations. It is known that during his life he was board member of the Presbyterian church, member of the Republican party, and belonged to the Knights of Pythias.

Mr. Greble's first wife Carrie died in 1878 while visiting relatives in Battle Creek. Her mother Carrie Cantine lived with her daughter's

^74 Portrait and Biographical Album of Barry and Eaton County, (Chicago: Chapman Bros., 1891) p. 601.
family at least from 1870 on and stayed on to care for the family after
the daughter's death. Carrie Cantine is mentioned in John Greble's
will dated 1885 and filed in 1891.

John and Carrie Greble had two children, Belle born in 1866 and
Fred born 1871. Belle married an Ira Van Valkenberg, between 1885 and
1888. They lived in Hastings until about 1900. Just before 1900, they
built a large and substantial house at 434 W. Green street, just across
the street and down a block from the house her father built. Ira Van
Valkenberg was in the furniture business and what happened to them
after 1900 was not investigated. It is known they had one child, a
girl before 1890.

Fred Greble worked for his brother-in-law, Ira and in 1891 married
a Stella Rogers, no further records of him were traced. The family
does not seem to have participated in either the financial or social
affairs of the city after 1900. Neither child, Belle or Fred are
listed in the 1923 City directory.

John Greble married his second wife Minnie after 1885, when he
made a will, and before 1888, when John and Minnie deeded 333 W. Green
to his daughter Belle. It is assumed that the estate or property of
John's first wife Carrie was settled in 1888 and the land transfers
relate to settling of that estate. A guardianship was established
for Fred at the same time and various real estate properties changed
hands among family members. After John's death, the house at 333 W.
Green was deeded back to John's wife Minnie. From what facts can be
gathered John and Minnie Greble lived at 333 W. Green even though it

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was in Belle's name.

After John Greble's death in 1891 and before 1893 Minnie married Chester Messer. Chester and his brother Richard Messer were considered to be some of the City's outstanding financiers of the time. They were instrumental in bringing to Hastings a man named Emil Tyden, who became one of the town's leading industrialists. Mr. Tyden invented the Viking sprinkler system, which became the present-day Viking Company. He also patented locks for railroad cars which evolved into the Internation Lock and Seal Company and developed a Tyden table lock for the furniture company. Mr. Tyden's nephew, Aben Johnson, started the Hastings Manufacturing Company which makes piston rings, filters, and other accessories for automobiles.

Mr. Tyden purchased 333 W. Green from Minnie Greble Messer and lived there for about ten years. He later built a more modern house. After Mr. Tyden sold the Green street house, it was converted to apartments, which is its present use.

333 W. Green is an elegant example of stick style architecture and when painted in contrasting colors, it is an impressive house. The house is well constructed, with high quality materials and workmanship befitting its first owner.

The daughter's house at 434 W. Green is another example of excellent late Victorian architecture. It was built by H. Oscar Younks. Oscar Younks has been identified as the builder of many of the outstanding houses of Hastings from 1860 to 1900.

There is speculation that Mr. Younks built 333 W. Green for Mr.
Greble because Mr. Youngs was the only local builder capable of constructing these houses. If Mr. Youngs did not build 333 W. Green, then it had to be built by builders from out of town.

Two primary methods are used for dating houses, one building permits and the other tax rolls. Sometimes building permits survive while tax rolls do not; hence it is important to understand and be able to use building permits if they exist for the particular area of inquiry. However, building permits were not used for the study of Green street in Hastings, because they were not issued there until the 1950s.

An example of the use of information obtained from building permits and the limitation and inaccuracies of such information in documenting houses in the City of Detroit, is described by Mark Coir in his Manual of Building Permits:

The Index to the Building Permits is entered by way of the original street address. Beginning under the name of the street, proceed from the first entry through to the last, jotting down every instance the street number or a number approximating it appears. When noting the entries, copy both the address of the permit and its accompanying date, for both are needed to identify the building permit in the Record of Building Permits.

A general rule to follow is to note the entry of every number falling six numbers above or below the original street address. This should adequately cover all the possible entries in the Index which could apply to the building being researched.

Theoretically the desired permit (in the record) shouldn't be difficult to spot, since its content should corroborate the structural specification, original use, and location of the building as closely as possible. In other words, it should correspond precisely to what is know about the building...Occasionally for instance, not one permit is located...but two or three permits.
...The best advice that can be given to anyone using the Record of Building Permits is never to lose sight of its limitations. The fact that a building permit was requested and issued, for one, is no guarantee that a building was ever constructed from it...It should always be remembered that the information contained in the Record is accurate only inasmuch as it was drawn from the applicant's design specifications and original intentions for the building; only on rare occasions were corrections made afterwards to the record of building permits to reflect changes made during the construction of the building.

Finally, we should not forget three major items: first, that we haven't the faintest notion of what the addition, alteration, and repair permits might reveal to us...second, that we have no means of gaining access to numerous permits (not indexed)...and third, that the possibility always exists that a building may, in fact, have been illegally, without the benefit of an issued permit.75

In the Records of Building Permit book, the information furnished was listed by column under various categories. The columns extended across two facing pages and recorded the pertinent facts as construction progressed. All permits were numbered in sequence, number one being the first permit issued during a given year. A worksheet with explanations follows that would be appropriate for the Detroit area. Each worksheet would have to incorporate information available for each city. (Figure 30)

Conclusion

Americans have developed an appreciation of significant buildings. They are searching within their own communities for architecture of historical significance. People are attempting to preserve these

### BUILDING PERMITS WORKSHEET

Address: (the current address)

Legal description: (the legal description by lot, block or section)

Original owner: (owner or applicant to whom the permit was issued)

Original address of owner where different:

List of possible permits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>number of permit</th>
<th>date of issuance</th>
<th>remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Number of permit:

date: (the date upon which the building permit was issued)

number of stories: (the building height by stories)

material: (the principle building material used in construction of the building, such as stone, brick or wood)

how occupied: (the original use of the structure)

dimensions of building: (the dimensions of the structure)

valuation: (the estimated cost of the construction)

fees paid: (the amount of the fee paid for the permit)

remarks: (space reserved for any additional comments)

Figure 17
buildings because they realize that architecture "represents the collective efforts and ideas of a civilization." More and more, people want to view older buildings - simply to enjoy the sense of beauty, heritage and nostalgia they represent.

In many communities, it is fashionable to own an older house and, if need be, to restore it. It is not only fashionable, it is financially astute. An older house provides more quality of workmanship and more living space than a new house, and at far less cost.

To those persons who are deeply interested in the histories of early houses and of the people who built and lived in them -- irreplaceable treasures all -- this paper is dedicated.

---

APPENDIX

LAND TRANSFER WORKSHEET

Address:

Legal description:

Type of record:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Liber</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

104
BUILDING PERMITS WORKSHEET

Address:

Legal description:

Original owner:

Original address of owner where different:

List of possible permits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>number of permit</th>
<th>date of issuance</th>
<th>remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Number of permit:

date:

number of stories:

material:

how occupied:

dimensions of building:

valuation:

fees paid:

remarks:
## REFERENCE MATERIAL WORKSHEET

FOR ________________

### Published material:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication Date</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Findings:

### City Directories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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REFERENCE MATERIAL WORKSHEET

FOR ______________________

Manuscripts in historical collections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Article Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Collection</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings:

Privately held collections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner of collection</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Date of examination</th>
<th>item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings:
PROBATE RECORDS WORKSHEET

File number:
Type of record: Date of event:
Name:
Date of record:
Name of administrator:
Names of heirs-at-law: Relationship:

Names of other persons mentioned:

Inventory of property:
# Vital Records Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Births</strong></td>
<td>Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deaths</strong></td>
<td>Age</td>
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<td><strong>Marriages</strong></td>
<td>Groom</td>
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<td><strong>Divorces</strong></td>
<td>Husband</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
TAX ROLLS WORKSHEET

Address: Time period to be searched from_______ to__________

Legal description:

Style:

Date of construction:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Assessed value</th>
<th>Total tax</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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</table>
HOUSE INVENTORY WORKSHEET

House address:

Present owner:

Owner's address where different:

Legal description:
  lot:
  section or township:

Architectural significance:
  style:
  architect if known:

Physical description:
  building material:
  structural material:
  foundation:
  roof pitch:

Date of construction:

Map search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>On map yes/no</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
FLAT

SHED

GABLE

SALT BOX

GAMBREL

HIP

SHED DORMER
SINGLE DORMER

ROOF TYPES

MANSARD

169

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Appendix D
ARCHITECTURAL TERMINOLOGY
Many surveyors are concerned that they do not know the special terms used to describe architecture and the component parts of buildings. This need not be a problem. The following guide to architectural and building terminology both illustrates and labels the major parts of structures. It will assist the survey team in completing the "Description" sections of the survey and district forms and cards and in refining the survey report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>SQUARE</th>
<th>RECTANGULAR</th>
<th>&quot;L&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;U&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;T&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;H&quot;</th>
<th>CENTER, SPACE OR COURTYARD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PAVILION</td>
<td>IRREGULAR</td>
<td>CRUCIFORM</td>
<td>CIRCULAR</td>
<td>POLYGONAL</td>
<td>APSIDAL</td>
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<td>WINGS</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>UNKNOWN</td>
<td>FRONT</td>
<td>SIDE</td>
<td>FRONT AND SIDE</td>
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<td>FRONT AND BOTH SIDES</td>
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<tr>
<td>STORY</td>
<td>REAR</td>
<td>FRONT AND REAR</td>
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<td>FRONT, REAR AND BOTH SIDES</td>
<td>REAR AND BOTH SIDES</td>
<td>IRREGULAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASEMENT</td>
<td>1 STORY</td>
<td>½ STORY</td>
<td>2 STORY</td>
<td>2½ STORY</td>
<td>3 STORY</td>
<td>MULTI-STORY</td>
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<td>WOOD SIDING</td>
<td>UNEXPOSED</td>
<td>EXPOSED</td>
<td>FLUSH BOARD</td>
<td>CLAPBOARD</td>
<td>SHIPLAP</td>
<td>SHINGLES</td>
<td>BOARD AND BATTEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>STONE: SHAPE, COURSING, FINISH</td>
<td>PLAIN OR SPLIT FIELDSTONE</td>
<td>COBBLESTONE</td>
<td>SLATE OR SHALE</td>
<td>RANDOM RUBBLE</td>
<td>COUSED RUBBLE</td>
<td>SQUARED RUBBLE</td>
<td>CUT STONE, BROKEN COURSE</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMALL STONE</td>
<td>ROCK-FACED</td>
<td>RUSTICATED</td>
<td>VERMICULATED</td>
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<th>Stretcher Bond</th>
<th>English Bond</th>
<th>Flemish Bond</th>
<th>Common Bond</th>
<th>Garden Wall</th>
<th>Diaper Bond</th>
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<td>Plain Eaves</td>
<td>Eaves and Rafters</td>
<td>Boxed</td>
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<td>Parapet with Balustrade</td>
<td>Roof Trim: Raking Type</td>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>Boxed Cornice</td>
<td>Boxed Cornice with Returns</td>
<td>Boxed Pedimented Cornice</td>
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<td>Decorated Gable</td>
<td>Roof Trim: Special Features</td>
<td>Cupola</td>
<td>Belvedere</td>
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<td>Window or Door Structural Opening Shape</td>
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<td>Flat</td>
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<td>Window or Door Head</td>
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<td>Plain</td>
<td>Lintel</td>
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<td>Radiating Arch with Keystone</td>
<td>Arch, Alternating Vousoirs</td>
<td>Arch, Stepped Vousoirs</td>
<td>Shelf or Entablature</td>
<td>Plain Pediment</td>
<td>Segmental Pediment</td>
<td>Double Curve Pediment</td>
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<td>Broken Pediment</td>
<td>Flat Hood, Plain or Bracketed</td>
<td>Curved Hood, Plain or Bracketed</td>
<td>Fanlight</td>
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<td>Window Sills</td>
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<td>Decorated Slip Sill</td>
<td>Decorated Lug Sill</td>
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Survey Tips

1. **Time of year** can have a great impact on the comfort and success of a fieldwork project. The best times to do photographic work are spring and fall when there is no heavy foliage to obscure the survey sites. Be aware of these problems when planning your survey.

2. **Cold/bad weather survey** poses special problems. Remember that camera shutters freeze and that ball point pens won't work in cold temperatures. Be sure you're equipped to protect your field material from rain and snow.

3. **Survey by block** when inventorying a small town or city. Start in the upper right hand corner of a block and proceed clockwise around it until every structure is recorded.

Particularly if using census tracts, survey teams will find that there is less risk of missing structures when surveying in this manner.

4. A two person survey team is usually the safest and most effective way to inventory an area. One person can shoot the photos and the other can record street numbers, roll-frame numbers, and other pertinent information on the field forms.

5. **Transportation** can be by foot, automobile, bicycle or whatever seems most applicable to the particular survey area involved. For intensive urban surveys, walking is usually the most effective method. In rural districts, where dogs can be a problem, photograph from the car.
GLOSSARY

Legal Terms

**Administrator**: a person appointed to administer the business of the estate and to distribute the residue of the estate according to law.

**Administrator's bond**: a bond posted by the person selected as administrator of the estate.

**Assignment of dower**: the document by which a widow's dowery is assigned to her as her legal share under the law.

**Decedent**: an interchangeable term for the deceased person.

**Decree of distribution**: final instrument issued in a probate case.

**Determination of heirs**: This is a sole proceeding for the determination of heir at law for persons who have died many years before. The order to determine are recorded in a chain of title so that surviving heirs can deed a clear title.

**Disposition**: the sworn testimony of a witness.

**Dower**: the land and tenements to which a widow has claim (in life estate), after the death of her husband, for support of herself and her children.

**Estate**: that which is owned by the deceased at death or by a minor or mentally incompetent person while living.

**Executor**: the appointed person who executes and fulfills the will of the decedent.

**Final account**: a recording of financial actions and transactions of the administrator or executor.

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Heirs at law: those persons who would inherit the real and personal property of the decedent who died without a will.

Inventory: a detailed list of all goods and chattel of the deceased.

Letters of administration: the probate court authorization of the administrator.

Order assigning residue: the final order of the Probate Court declaring that title to real and personal property is vested in named persons in the stated proportions.

Petition: a request for administration of the estate or for admitting the will to probate.

Receipt: written acknowledgement that goods or property have been received.

Sale bill: records of good and property sold at public sale be the executer or administrator of an estate.
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