



HOW TO RESEARCH OLDER OR HISTORIC BUILDINGS www.lib.uwo.ca/archives

Getting Started

There are many resources available to you at Archives and Special Collections (Archives and Research Collections Centre) to assist in researching a local house or historic building. This guide discusses key published and archival resources that can help you identify the past owners or tenants of a property, as well as when the building was constructed and how it might have changed over time.

There are a few facts about the building that you may want to gather before you start your research in the archives. It is best to review local histories and published architectural resources to explore the topic before delving deeper into archival material. Please bring any information you have which relates to the building, so it can be consulted when doing research.

The resources listed below are outlined in more detail:

- City Directories
- Assessment Rolls
- Fire Insurance Plans
- Architectural records
- Other resources: Photographs; Maps and Plans; Other Archival Resources; Selected Books

Please consult Archives Staff in the Reading Room or look in the Shared Library Catalogue (www.lib.uwo.ca) to search for the material described in this guide. Some resources are accessible only via a staff search of internal listings.

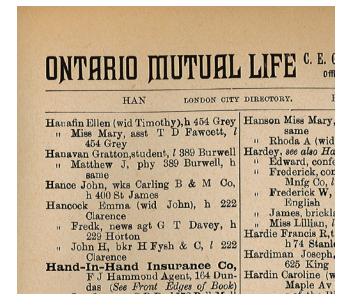
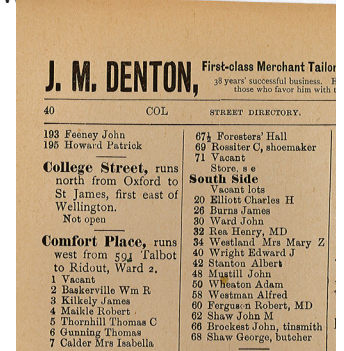
City Directories

London (1856-present)

City directories provide information about the occupant who resides at a property and also their occupation (if known). Prior to 1890 the directories provide an alphabetical listing of names but not the corresponding house number, while later versions will include this information. Most useful is the street section, organized by each side of the street and address number -- so an address can be traced through the years. City directories also contain business listings, advertisements, municipal information, history of community and county sections. Archives Staff can provide instruction on the use of the city directories and the microform readers.

The London city directories are available in the Reading Room for:

- 1856-1961 on microfilm or microfiche;
- 1961-present in book format.



Extracts from London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1893.

Assessment Rolls

London City (1854-1960)

Assessment Rolls are created for property

tax evaluation and contain some or all of the following information: name of occupant and/or owner, occupation, religion, and age of the head of the household; then the description (lot size, location), assessed value of property and building. An increase in property value from one year to another can indicate when a structure is built on a property or major change to the structure. When Township Assessment Rolls are used they can assist in filling in occupancy or ownership information between available directories and census data.

Please consult the following maps located in the Reading Room prior to reviewing the Assessment Rolls. Use the Ward Maps for the City of London to find the ward that area of the city is located within. The London Assessment Roll books are organized by ward and then as the assessor walked the streets to compile the information. Prior to annexation it is necessary to work with the Assessment Rolls for the surrounding municipalities. The Annexation Map should be used to confirm the date the property was annexed by the City

of London, as Assessment Rolls will begin the next year for that area. The best way to search the volume for the property is by street name and lot/address number or owner/occupant if known.

Assessment Rolls are available for the following municipalities, with most available on microform (inclusive dates are given):

- London 1854-1960, originals (1854-1916)
- There are printed London Assessment Rolls for 1916, 1927, 1939, 1953, 1959 and 1966 with the streets arranged alphabetically and then by street number
- Annexed municipalities of London East, London West and also surrounding areas for London Township, 1875-1897 and Westminster Township, 1854-1955
- Township Assessment Rolls are available for many Counties including Middlesex, Elgin, Lambton.

Prior to approximately 1882, street numbers were not usually given as they were not in common use yet. It is best to know the property owners/occupants before working

with the Assessment Rolls. This can often be done by going to the Land Registry Office to get a copy of the abstract for the property as it will list property owners. Collector's rolls were used to track the payment of property tax and many of the same types of data are tracked if years are missing for Assessment Rolls.

ASSESSMENT ROLL FOR THE CITY OF LONDON, FOR THE YEAR 1860, IN <i>Fifth</i> WARD.													
NUMBER	NAME OF TAXABLE PARTY.			STREET or HIGHWAY	NUMBER OF ACRES	R.A.P.Y.S. VALUE OR GROSS VALUE OF LAND	TAXABLE VALUE OF LAND	YEARLY VALUE OF HOUSEHOLD	AMOUNT OF TAXABLE HOUSEHOLD	TOTAL TAXABLE VALUE OF THE WARD	YEARLY TAXES OF THE WARD	RATES	REMARKS
	FREEHOLDERS	SECURITIES	PARTIES NOT LISTED FOR REAL PROPERTY										
			<i>Red forward</i>										
V3683	Jesse M. Rapley			<i>S. Gray</i>	1/8	1067	2711	2881	200	1492	96	30	
V3684	Jesse M. Rapley				1/8	102	66	66	200	12			
V3685	John Bailey				1/8	5	5	5	V				
V3686	Hugh Brown				1/8	30	30	30	V				
V3687	John H. Brown				1/8	24	24	24	V				
V3688	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	10	10	10	V				
V3689	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	24	24	24	V				
V3690	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	27	27	27	V				
V3691	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	33	33	33	V				
V3692	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	66	66	66	V				
V3693	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	33	33	33	V				
V3694	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	39	39	39	V				
V3695	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	39	39	39	V				
V3696	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	12	12	12	V				
V3697	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	12	12	12	V				
V3698	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	12	12	12	V				
V3699	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	48	48	48	V				
V3700	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	72	72	72	V				
V3701	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	18	18	18	V				
V3702	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	24	24	24	V				
V3703	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	12	12	12	V				
V3704	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	27	27	27	V				
V3705	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	30	30	30	V				
V3706	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	36	36	36	200	12			
V3707	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	15	15	15	V				
V3708	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	24	24	24	V				
V3709	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	20	20	20	V				
V3710	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	31	31	31	V				
V3711	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	15	15	15	V				
V3712	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	21	21	21	200	72			
V3713	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	63	63	63	V				
V3714	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	15	15	15	V				
V3715	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	15	15	15	V				
V3716	Thomas W. J. J. J.				1/8	28	28	28	V				
					5331	11917	25057	25601	200	1725	114	30	

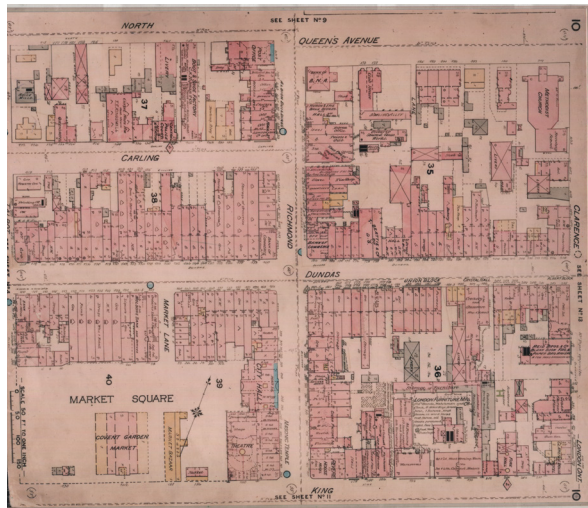
Assessment rolls provide a wealth of information such as occupation, age, Freeholder (owner) or Householder (tenant), owner if different from occupant, size of lot, property and building value. Above: London Assessment Roll, 1860, Ward 5.

Fire Insurance Plans

London (1881 rev. 1888-1958 rev. 1970)

Fire Insurance Plans (FIPs) are urban city maps initially created

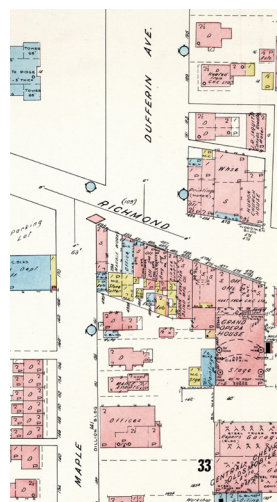
for insurance companies to provide them with information about building composition and to assess fire risk and assist in assigning insurance rates. These plans provide details on building construction and usage and help give a static impression of streetscapes, neighborhoods and business/commercial regions. There is a key and color coding on the plans to help identify the type of materials that make up a structure; also the description usually indicates usage of the building for business or commercial purposes. FIPs are
Ontario Fire insurance Plan Collection



London Fire Insurance Plan, 1881 rev. 1888.

excellent resources to help you track major changes a building would have undergone over its lifetime, including renovations, additions or demolitions. Due to the amount of research and data gathering required, plans were only updated after major changes in a community.

Archives and Special Collections holds FIPs for London as well as most Ontario communities. To verify if we hold FIPs for the community you are interested in please visit our FIP resource guide on our website or contact the Archives Reading Room. The Map and Data Centre also has London FIPs for 1881 rev. 1888 to 1912 rev. 1922 available online.



Sheet 29 detail. London Fire Insurance Plan, 1958 rev. 1970.

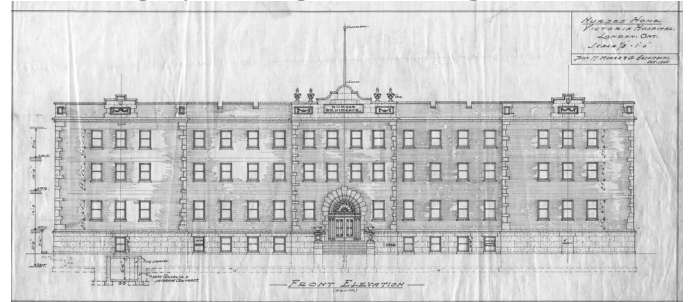
Architectural Plans

The major architectural collection held by Archives and Special Collections is the Murphy-Moore Collection of Architectural Records. The architectural drawings in the collection date from c1850 to 2009 spanning the various incarnations of the firm. This collection contains thousands of plans and drawings of London and Southwestern Ontario area houses, factories, churches, businesses, Western University buildings and well known London architectural landmarks. Be sure to ask the Archives Staff to search the database to see if one of the firm's architects designed the building you are researching.

A few other architectural sources are available such as the Arthur Nutter fonds and the Frank White fonds.

Photographs

Archives and Special Collections may have photographs of the building or street you are researching. We hold extensive photograph collections including the Ontario Postcard Collection, London Free Press Collection of Photographic Negatives and general



Victoria Hospital Nurses Residence, Murphy-Moore Collection of Architectural Records, #943.

photograph holdings, plus other resources. Please consult with Archives Staff as we must do a search and retrieve material for viewing. Another approach is using locally

*"Locust Mount",
 661 Talbot St., built
 for Elijah Leonard Jr.
 London Free Press
 Collection of Photo-
 graphic Negatives,
 Sept. 30, 1971.*



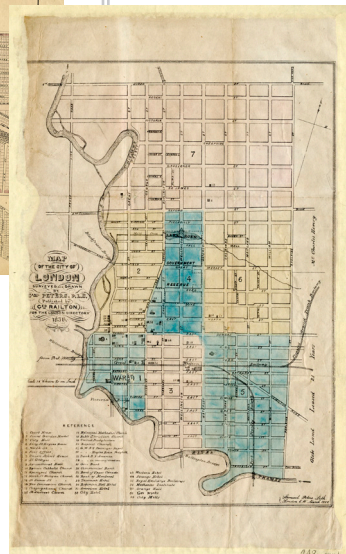
published resources for review of pictorial content to see if the building being researched is documented, especially if it is a landmark structure.

Maps and Plans

Many other maps, plans and atlases are available for research such as: the Illustrated Historical Atlases for counties in Ontario (also online at McGill University), Tremaine's Map of the County of Middlesex, Bird's Eye View maps and Map of the City of London (1856) by Samuel Peters. Other specific plans useful in building research are: Moore block plans for London and Subdivision Plan Books for London. Please consult Archives Staff for assistance in searching for maps and plans. We also recommend visiting the Map and Data Centre on campus to consult their resources.



Map of the City of London and Suburbs, 1870, CX86.



Map of the City of London by Samuel Peters, 1856, C48.

Other Archival Sources @ Archives and Special Collections

Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee Files (research files – great starting point)

Abstract Book (Land Deeds) for London, 1830-1865

London Building Permit Index, 1908-1926

Selected Books

Brackets & bargeboards, London : architectural walks in London, Ontario, revised ed. / Alice Gibb; 1989.

Historical Sketches of London : from site to city / Nancy Z. Tausky; 1993.

The Historic Heart of London / John H. Lutman; 1977.

The North and the East / John H. Lutman; 1982.

The South and the West / John H. Lutman; 1979.

Victorian Architecture in London and Southwestern Ontario : symbols of aspiration / Nancy Z. Tausky and Lynne D. DiStefano; c 1986.



Archives and Special Collections

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