

Finding House Histories



Indiana Room

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Getting Started

Step 1: Prepare to Research

- Start by identifying goals for your research. What would you like to know and why? Are you looking for pictures? Legal documents? All of the above?
- Consider how you will organize your information. This could be as simple as a folder or notebook or a computer program. Consistency is key.
- What organizations or local experts are in your area? Do you have a genealogical society, local library, or county historical society that may be of assistance?

Step 2: Identify & Record Information You Already Know

- Start with yourself and your own knowledge of your property and home. Write down everything you already know and work backwards.
- Take pictures of and inspect your home.
- If you can, identify the home's architectural style, previous owners, and longtime residents of your neighborhood who may have knowledge of your home. Your community is your greatest resource!

Tip: Search the attic, basement, and closets of your home. Many people find blueprints or builder plans in these rooms!

Step 3: Establish Basic Facts via City Directories & Legal Records

- The first goal in research is to find and record the basic facts relating to your property (who, what, when, and where) to the best of your ability and identify research gaps that may require more extensive research.
- To do this, start by finding basic legal documents such as deeds, property tax information, and listings in the city directories. Consider creating a timeline of your house and its ownership.
- For Madison County, a great place to start is by looking up your property card with the

Auditor's Office: www.madisoncounty.in.gov/auditors-office

Tip: Utilize the Anderson Public Library's vast collection of Anderson City Directories! Additionally, reach out to the Madison County Auditor's and Recorder's office for property tax assessment, deeds, mortgages, and more.

Step 4: Deepen your Research

- Now that you've identified and organized some basic information about your property, you can deepen your research, filling in any research questions & gaps you've identified. This may include but is not limited to:
 - Searching newspapers, microfilm, and obituaries for information about both your home and the people that lived in it.
 - Reaching out to previous homeowners, previous and current neighbors, and community social pages to learn more about the property.
 - Contacting the County Auditor & Recorder's Office for missing property information and legal documents.
 - Researching and identifying architectural styles and renovations in your home. & consulting an architectural guidebook.

Tip: Consider the broader social and historical context your house & its occupants lived in. This includes global, national, and local politics, economics, social movements, and more.

Finding Historic Photos of Your Home

Unless your house is on a historical registry, has architectural significance, or housed a prominent local figure in the community, Anderson Public Library likely does not have historic photos of your house in the collection. However, we are happy to assist you in looking through our collection to see if it is located in our family or vertical files in the Madison County Architecture and Homes folder (Cabinet 8-3).

Your best chance for locating historic pictures of your house is through contacting previous owners or their descendent, reaching out to longtime neighbors, or even posting in the local community's social media pages or forums. Often these people will have taken photos of the house throughout its lifetime and they are located in family albums!

Some other ways to find historic photos include:

- Examining digitized and physical photograph collections at local historical societies, libraries, etc.
- Searching through newspapers
- Looking at aerial photographs

Further Readings

- Discovering the History of Your House and Your Neighborhood by Betsey J. Green (Copy available in Indiana Room- IND GEN 907 Green)
- House Histories: A Guide to Tracing the Genealogy of Your Home by Sally Light (Copy available in Indiana Room - IND GEN 728 Light)
- "Historic House Research Guide" by Indiana Landmarks
(<https://www.indianalandmarks.org/2016/06/historic-house-research-guide/>)