

LOCAL HISTORY RESOURCES

BETTY GIBOUT REAL ESTATE LISTING CARDS

Real estate listing cards are the original descriptive cards from the listing of a property through a local realtor.

- Organized by street (alphabetically) and address (numerically) and available from 1955 to 1997 for extant buildings*.
- Does not include property sold by owner, land contract, or other unique sales.
- *Some cards are also available for properties that have been demolished; these are in the archival collection for Real Estate Razed Buildings File, Collection 273.

CITY & COUNTY DIRECTORIES

City and County Directories are directly accessible in paper (book) form or microfilm. This is the most comprehensive way available to document the existence of a particular structure. Directories contain names, addresses and occupations of the residents and/or owners of a structure.

- City directories (RL Polk & Co.) are available from 1865-present.
- Suburban directories cover 1957 to 1997.
- Since 1999, these directories cover the entire Kent County area.

MAPS & ATLASES

A. Kent County Atlases. Available for 1855, 1863, 1876, 1894, and 1907. Indicate landowners and depict some building locations for structures outside incorporated areas.

B. Plat Maps. Available for 1919, 1939, 1955, 1961, 1971, 1977, 1981, and 1996. Graphically represent unincorporated plots of ground by named owners, outside of incorporated areas of Kent County.

C. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Three editions are available on microfilm: 1888-1895, 1912-1930, and 1930-1950. The 1953 edition, with corrections, is available in full-color hard copy. Provide street names and building footprints for incorporated areas of Grand Rapids.

NEWSPAPERS: ARCHITECTURE/BUILDING DATA

Construction articles sometimes appeared in special sections on the building industry and related trades:

- The *Grand Rapids Herald*: building section from 1907 through 1959. Includes articles about properties recently constructed or sold, or under contract to build. Articles sometimes name the architect, builder, and special contractors. Sometimes, a description of the property, along with a photograph or sketch, the owner's name, address or neighborhood are given.
- The *Grand Rapids Press*: published a similar section, usually on Saturdays. Articles from both papers can be found in our Architectural Street Files clippings folders, organized alphabetically by street name, in our vertical file drawers.

NEWSPAPERS: GENERAL

General newspaper articles can prove key resources of information on major commercial and/or institutional buildings:

- From 1844 to present, newspapers are available on microfilm.
- Limited indexing is available for the *Grand Rapids Press*; see staff for assistance.
- Indirect indexing is available using the following resources. *Ask staff for assistance.*
 - a) Robinson Studio Collection *Herald* index.
 - b) Lydens Card files. Indexing by subject.
 - c) Obituary indexes and files. Obituaries and news articles about prominent deaths might contain information on the disposition of wills and the deceased's properties.
- Vertical files. Clippings files with photocopies of newspaper articles by topic.
- Portrait & Biography files. Clippings files with information on Grand Rapids persons.



SPECIAL SOURCES

A. Heritage Hill Architectural/Historical Inventory Cards. Prepared as part of the application for National Register of Historic Places nomination, these microfilmed cards contain information on select houses in the Heritage Hill Historic District.

B. Heritage Hill Reference Sources. Kept at the service desk, includes an index of “calendar” homes.

C. Richard Harms Architectural Database. This database references items found in the Architectural Street Files in the clippings folders area.

D. Buildings folders in the Vertical/Clippings files. Clippings files on named buildings, most downtown, along with history and related literature.

ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

The following archival collections are most specifically related to buildings.

- **Coll. 245, Past Perfect Historic Preservation Records.** Contains images, documents, and architectural drawings related to the work of local historic preservation firm Past Perfect, Inc.
- **Coll. 254, the Grand Rapids Building Collection.** Includes information on architecture and planning, architects, historic preservation, city planning, and landscape architecture in published documents, images and architectural drawings.
- **Coll. 125, the Robinson Studio Photographic Collection.** Includes negatives of Grand Rapids subjects from roughly 1938-1989. *A special index by address can be accessed on the main floor; ask staff for assistance.*

Other archival collections which include large sections of images of buildings:

- **Coll. 054,** the GRPL Photo Collection
- **Coll. 078,** the GRPL Postcard Collection
- **Coll. 091,** *Grand Rapids Illustrated* Collection
- **Coll. 093,** Laura Lorenson Photograph Collection
- **Coll. 118,** GRPL Urban Renewal Pictorials Collection
- **Coll. 273,** Father Dennis Morrow Buildings Photos, for images of razed buildings
- **Coll. 286,** GR City Assessor's Office Razed Buildings Collection

PERIODICALS

Some historical magazines and indexes, such as the *Michigan Tradesman*, the *Grand Rapids Mirror*, *Grand Rapids Progress*, and *Grand Rapids Spectator*, might include information on area businesses and images of their structures.

BOOKS

- Books about architecture are generally located in the **720s**. Books about prefabricated houses, some including house plans, might be located on the shelf by call number, or might be included in the archival collections in Collection 254.
- Books about neighborhoods might also be available in the **977s**.

KEY LOCAL GOVERNMENT SOURCES

- **Tax history.** Available at the County Treasurer's Office, County Building. From 1875 on. Information includes owner, tax assessment and limited description of structures. You must have the old-style legal description, including the name of the developer's subdivision, block and lot number to use the records.
- **City assessment files.** Historical files are located in the City Archives. Contain information on each standing structure within the city limits, including build date, structure description and photograph(s). Open by appointment only. Contact Matthew Ellis (mellis@grcity.us) or Tony Wright (awright@grcity.us). Phone: 616-456-4127.
- **Register of deeds.** Property records showing transfers in ownership. Records before 1870 are available at the library. Later years are available at the Register of Deed's Office, County Building.