

Researching the History of Your House Resources



Researching the history of a house is a bit like archeology and a bit like genealogy—a house is a physical object built by people, but the people who lived there are an important part of its history. These resources can give you a start in discovering your house's history.

Architectural Style

Knowing the architectural style of your home may give you an idea of the age of your house. However, popular architectural styles were “revived” at later times, so use caution when considering style to determine the era your house was built. Baltimore's rowhouses were built from the 18th through the 20th century, and were constructed using various architectural styles. Sears, Aladdin and other manufacturers sold do-it-yourself “kit” houses in the early 20th century.

Web Resources

Aladdin Houses

<https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=aladdincat>

Baltimore Rowhouses

<http://thebaltimorechop.com/2014/05/02/a-reference-guide-to-baltimore-rowhouse-types/>

Historic New England: Architectural Style Guide for Homeowners

<https://www.historicnewengland.org/preservation/for-homeowners-communities/your-old-or-historic-home/architectural-style-guide/>

Sears Houses

<http://www.searsarchives.com/homes/byimage.htm>

Books

Belfoure, Charles and Mary Ellen Hayward. *The Baltimore Rowhouse*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

McAlester, Virginia. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to*



Cultural Resources

Historic preservation professionals have produced lists of significant buildings, historic districts, and landscapes. The best known of these is the National Register of Historic Places—but such lists also exist for Baltimore City and the state of Maryland. Nominations for historically significant buildings and historic districts often contain useful information, such as written histories, photographs, and architectural drawings.

Web Resources

National Register of Historic Places

<https://npgallery.nps.gov/nrhp>

Historic American Buildings Survey

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/>

Maryland Historical Trust, MEDUSA database

<https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/>

Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP)

<http://chap.baltimorecity.gov/>

Land Records Searching

Searching for land records will give you the names of the owners of your house. If the house is in Baltimore City, these records may also give you the name of the owner of the land your house is built upon—these owners collected “ground rent.” Plats are maps which show boundaries and lots. The Maryland State Archives has a guide to searching land records online, available as a handout in the Maryland Department.

Web Resources

Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation Real Property Data Search

<http://sdat.dat.maryland.gov/RealProperty/Pages/default.aspx>

Maryland Land Records

<https://mdlandrec.net/main/>



MARYLAND STATE LIBRARY RESOURCE CENTER
ENOCH PRATT *free* LIBRARY

Newspapers

Newspapers offer a wealth of information for those researching the history of a house. The Periodicals Department has historic newspapers on microfilm for many cities and counties in Maryland. Many newspapers have also been digitized and are searchable online.

EPFL Databases

To access databases: From EPFL homepage (www.prattlibrary.org), select "research," then "databases," and select type of database.

Baltimore Sun databases (Proquest)

Historical *Sun* index, 1837-1991, and *Sun* index, 1991-present. Can be used at home with EPFL library card.

Maryland Newspapers

Database of 68 local and regional Maryland newspapers, various start dates to present. Can be used at home with EPFL library card.

Maryland Historical Newspapers

This database includes three Maryland newspapers: *Baltimore Sun*, 1837-1901; *Chestertown Transcript* (Chestertown), 1866-1876; and *National American* (Bel Air), 1859-1866. Can be used at home with EPFL library card.

Newspapers.com Library Edition

Dating from the early 1700s into the 2000s, Newspapers.com Library Edition contains full runs and portions of runs of well-known, regional and state titles to small local newspapers in the United States and other countries.

Online Historic Newspapers

Library of Congress, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers

Database of historic American newspapers from 1789 to 1922. Searchable, digitized images of 22 different Maryland newspapers.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>



Maps

Maps can tell you about property boundaries, land ownership, land use, streets, and even dimensions and building materials of houses. The Maryland Department has more than 2500 maps from around the state, dating back to the 17th century. Some particularly useful maps are

EPFL Database

Sanborn Maps

Produced as fire insurance maps, these maps give detailed information about buildings, including building materials, dimensions, and number of stories. Maps for Baltimore City from 1890-1953; also available for other Maryland cities. Can be used at home with EPFL library card.

Online Historic Maps

E. Sachse and Co. Bird's Eye View of the City of Baltimore, 1869

Panoramic view of the City in 1869 produced in 12 parts, showing streets with individual buildings and facades.

<https://collections.digitalmaryland.org/digital/collection/mdmc/id/17/rec/28>

Other Online Resources

Baltimore City Annexation

Arnold, Joseph L. "Suburban Growth and Municipal Annexation in Baltimore, 1745-1918." *Maryland Historical Magazine*, vol. 17, no. 2 (June, 1978), 109-128.

http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000097/000000/000018/restricted/msa_sc_5458_51_1208_2.pdf

Baltimore City Wards

<https://msa.maryland.gov/bca/wards/index.html>

Library of Congress, Sanborn Maps

Database and scanned color images of Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from many states. Sanborn maps for Maryland do not include Baltimore City.

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps>

The Geography of Baltimore City: Sources

Includes links to digitized, historically important maps of Baltimore City.

<https://msa.maryland.gov/bca/research-at-the-baltimore-city-archives/the-geography-of-baltimore-city-sources/index.html>



Researching People Who Lived in Your House

Once you have names of people who lived in your home, you can turn to other sources for further information. Many of these resources are also useful to genealogists.

Print and Microfilm Resources

City Directories

EPFL has Baltimore City directories, 1796-1964, and city directories for other Maryland cities and regions. Usually only searchable by name; gives address and occupations of residents.

Telephone Directories

Baltimore City, 1989-2005. On microfilm and microfiche.

Baltimore Address Telephone Directories and Criss Cross Directories

Searchable by address. Baltimore, 1936-2017. Criss cross directories also available for several Maryland counties and regions.

Online Resources

Baltimore City Directories: Comprehensive List

Includes links to digitized Baltimore City directories.

<https://baltimorecityhistory.net/baltimore-city-directories>

EPFL Databases

Ancestry Library Edition. Useful if you've found the name of a previous owner or resident—cannot be searched by address. US Census can be browsed by county and enumeration district. Available at Pratt Central and all branches for in-library use only.

Heritage Quest: Access to US Census, 1790-1940. Searchable by name; can be browsed by county and enumeration district. Can be used at home with a Pratt library card.



Historic Preservation Organizations/Other Libraries

Baltimore City Archives

<https://msa.maryland.gov/bca/>

Baltimore Heritage

<https://baltimoreheritage.org/>

Preservation Maryland

<http://www.preservationmaryland.org/>

Maryland Center for History and Culture

<https://www.mdhistory.org/>

Maryland State Archives

<http://msa.maryland.gov/>

National Trust for Historic Preservation

<https://savingplaces.org/>

Online Guide for Baltimore House Research

Baltimore Heritage: How to research the history of your house or neighborhood

<https://baltimoreheritage.org/resources/research-guide/>