
A GUIDE TO RESEARCHING

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SPRINGFIELD'S BUILDINGS



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**Genealogy/Local History Department
Springfield City Library**

Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this booklet came from a series of workshops given in the Genealogy/Local History Department of the Springfield City Library in the Spring of 1981. These workshops were sponsored by the library under a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, and were intended to introduce people to the resources available for doing architectural and historical research in Springfield. The response was so great that extra sessions had to be scheduled, and the need for this handbook became evident.

Local interest in the built environment of Springfield and its changes through time has grown tremendously in the last decade. Much of this can be attributed to four local organizations: the Historical Commission, the Historical Society, Bicentennial Commission and Preservation Trust. These groups have been stressing *local* history and architecture, and its value not only in understanding one's own past, but its relevance to understanding history and architecture on a much broader level.

This handbook is for Springfield research, however the methodology discussed here is the same for other towns and cities. The actual dates of and information included in maps, atlases, directories, etc. may differ, but the basic concept is the same. The Genealogy/Local History Department does have materials on surrounding towns and cities, but the researcher should first go to the library in the specific town or city that they're interested in. Almost all libraries have some local material, and someone knowledgeable about it.

The need for this research in Springfield arises from the destruction of the city's building records in the 1905 City Hall fire. Records weren't systematically kept and preserved again until 1910 so that it is impossible to date any structure in Springfield from building permits before this date.

This research can proceed slowly, as no single source or single location will yield all of the desired information. Most people are interested in knowing more about a building than how old it is. By following the guidelines in this booklet you can learn about the people who lived or worked there, the place of the structure in the development of its neighborhood, the opening of the street, and if there were previous structures on the site, as well as obtaining a close-up look at by-gone times.

Springfield is nearing its 350th anniversary, and even though very little remains from its first two centuries (1636-1836), the next century (1836-1936) is very well represented. Most of Springfield's neighborhoods developed during this period (the South End, North End, Memorial Square, Forest Park, Liberty Heights, Atwater Park, Maple Street, McKnight, the Hill, Pine Point, East Springfield and Indian Orchard) and much of Springfield's present building stock dates from this period. This guide is primarily for this period.

Edmond P. Lonergan, *Librarian*
Genealogy/Local History Department
Springfield City Library

I. Maps and Atlases of Springfield

The first known map of Springfield was executed in 1795 as part of a state-mandated survey of all the towns in Massachusetts. During the 19th and early 20th centuries a series of maps and atlases were produced which graphically portray the growth and development of Springfield.

The first step in researching local buildings' histories should be checking the maps and atlases of Springfield. It's usually easiest to begin with the most recent atlases (1910 and 1920) and work backwards through time. If the structure of interest isn't shown on the 1920 atlas (i.e. is less than sixty years old), then the best source of construction information is the Springfield Building Department, which is located in City Hall. If the structure is shown on the 1920 atlas, write this down, along with the owner's name. Then use the 1910 atlas and check for any changes in the structure or its property. This procedure is repeated with each previous atlas and map until the building isn't shown, or a different structure is shown. In this way the date of construction can be narrowed down to a more manageable period of ten or twenty years.

The following list includes all the maps and atlases that cover Springfield, and are on file in the Genealogy/Local History Dept. A brief description includes scale, geographical coverage, and an indication of the level of detailed information contained about Springfield's buildings. Until 1848 the present Chicopee was part of Springfield, and it is included on the early maps. In 1890 part of Longmeadow was annexed to form Forest Park, and again during the 1920's part of Longmeadow was annexed for residential development.

1. 1795 **A plan of the town of Springfield** 200 rods = 1 inch
Israel Chapin, Surveyor. Published by Comm. of Mass.
physical features, roads, some words about mills, churches, etc.
2. 1827 **Springfield** 20 rods = 1/8 inch
Surveyed by direction of the town 1826. Published by S. Bowles 1827.
roads (with names), physical features, major buildings (churches, mills),
and outlying houses in the town
3. 1830-1 **Springfield** no scale given
Published by Comm. of Mass.
physical features, roads (with names) major buildings
4. 1835 **Plan of Springfield** 96 rods = 1 inch
By Geo. Colton.
roads (no names), small squares for houses, with owner's name,
streams & ponds
5. 1851 **Map of Springfield, Mass.** 300 feet = 1 inch
Surveyed and drawn by Marcus Smith & H. A. Jones.
Published by M. Dripps, No. 103 Fulton St., N.Y.
covers Springfield, bounded *W* Conn. River, *E* Eastern Ave., *S* Mill
River, *N* Carew Corner & Western Railroad - building outlines,
owners' names, lot lines, elevation shading

6. **1855 Map of Hampden County, Mass.**
 Henry F. Walling H. A. Haley, Boston, Publisher
- a. overall Spfld. map: 200 rods = 1 inch
 shows streets and small squares for buildings, with owners' names,
 beyond the center of town
 - b. map of City of Spfld.: 30 rods = 1 inch
 covers Spfld., bounded *W* Conn. River, *E* Eastern Ave., *S* Mill River,
N Carew Corner & Western Railroad - streets, lot lines, building
 outlines, some owners' names
 - c. plan of the Ward Mfg. Co.'s premises at Indian Orchard 1250 feet = 1 inch
 streets and building outlines
7. **1860 Map of the City of Springfield, Hampden Co. Mass.**
 Published by McKinney & Smith. Surveyed by Smith & Van Zandt.
- a. City map: 250 feet = 1 inch
 covers Spfld., bounded *W* Conn. River, *E* Eastern Ave., *S* Mill River,
N Round Hill, Franklin St., Western Railroad & Hancock St. - streets
 with numbers, lot lines, building outlines
 - b. Town map: 1200 feet = 1 inch
 covers all of Spfld. - streets, small squares for buildings with owners'
 names in the area not covered by (a)
8. **1870 Map of the City of Springfield, Mass.**
 Beers, Ellis & Soule, N.Y.
- a. City map: 250 feet = 1 inch
 covers Spfld., bounded *W* Conn. River, *E* Eastern Ave., *S* Mill River,
N Hampden Park, Hooker St., Franklin St., pt. of McKnight area -
 streets with numbers, lot lines, building outlines, most owners' names
 - b. Town map: 1/2 mile = 1 inch
 covers all of Spfld. - streets, small squares for buildings with owners'
 names in the area not covered by (a)
 - c. Indian Orchard: 25 rods = 1 inch
 streets with names, lot lines, building outlines with owners' names



1870 Map of the City of Springfield

9. 1870 **Atlas of Hampden Co., Mass.**
Beers, Ellis & Soule, N.Y.
- pp. 32 & 33: overall map of Spfld. 1/2 mile = 1 inch
this is the same as Map 8b
- p. 34: plan of the City of Spfld. 1000 feet = 1 inch
street map of center of Spfld., only major buildings shown
- p. 37: Indian Orchard.
this is the same as Map 8c
10. 1875 **View of Springfield, Mass.**
Drawn & Published by O. H. Bailey & Co.
- "Birds Eye" - three-dimensional view of the built-up portion of Spfld.,
bounded *W* Conn. River, *E* Eastern Ave., *S* Mill River, *N* Round Hill,
Jefferson Avenue, Prospect St., Armory St., pt. of McKnight area.
Shows streets with names, and 3-D view of buildings.
11. 1882 **Atlas of Springfield City, Mass.**
Geo. H. Walker & Co., Boston.
- Plate 2: overall map of Spfld. 1800 feet = 1 inch
streets with names, small squares for buildings, owners' names - all
for area not covered by other plates
- Plates 4-12 and 15 & 16: partial maps of Spfld. 200 feet = 1 inch
covers Spfld. bounded *W* Conn. River, *E* Eastern Ave., McKnight area
S Sumner Ave. & Longhill St., Mill River, *N* Chicopee, McKnight area
streets with names, lot lines, building outlines (wood-frame, brick &
out-building differentiated) owners' names
12. 1886 **Springfield & Palmer Quadrangles** 1 mile = 1 inch
U.S. Geological Survey - streets (no names), small squares for buildings
in outlying areas of Springfield.
13. 1894 **New Topographical Atlas of the County of Hampden, Mass.**
L. J. Richards, Spfld.
- pp. 8 & 9 City of Springfield 1500 feet = 1 inch
covers all of Springfield, shows streets with names; for areas east of
built-up section - shows building outlines (with wood-frame, brick &
out-building differentiation) and owners' names
- pp. 12 & 13 North part of Spfld. 600 feet = 1 inch
- pp. 16 & 17 South part of Spfld. 600 feet = 1 inch
these 2 maps cover the western, "built-up" part of Spfld. - streets with
names, and major buildings
- pp. 20 & 21 Indian Orchard 300 feet = 1 inch
streets with names, lot lines, building outlines (with wood-frame, brick
& out-building differentiation) and some owners' names

14. 1899 **Atlas of the City of Springfield, Mass.**
L. J. Richards, Spfld.

26 plates

most at 150 feet = 1 inch
some at 300 feet or 600 feet to an inch

all of Springfield covered; streets with names & numbers, lot lines,
building outlines with differentiation for construction material, owners'
names, electric railway lines, fire alarms, hydrants, sewers



1899 Atlas of the City of Springfield - plate 3

15. 1910 **Atlas of the City of Springfield & the Town of Longmeadow, Mass.**
L. J. Richards & Co., Spfld.

25 plates

varying scales, most at 150 feet = 1 inch
all of Springfield covered; same information as 1899 Atlas

16. 1912 **Richards Standard Atlas of Hampden County**
Richards Map Co., Spfld.

Plate 1: Street map of Springfield

no scale given

Plates 2-22: detailed maps of other cities & towns in the County

17. 1920 **Richards Standard Atlas of the City of Springfield and the Town of Longmeadow, Mass.**
Richards Map Co., Spfld.

22 plates

varying scales
all of Springfield covered; same information as 1899 & 1910 Atlases
except owners' names listed in a rear appendix arranged alphabetically
by street

II. Directories of Springfield

The first directory of Springfield residents appeared in 1845 with the title of "Springfield Almanac, Directory, and Business Advertiser", and a new one has been published almost every year since then. The basic format is an alphabetical listing of residents, with their occupation and home addresses. From the very beginning business ads have also been in the directory, as well as some descriptive material on town/city government, churches, clubs, etc., and a fold-out street map. Most of the maps have been removed from the directories and are stored separately in the Genealogy/Local History Department.

After one has obtained owners' names from checking the relevant maps and atlases, the next step is to check the directories, beginning with the year of the earliest map/atlas that the particular building was found on. Then, one works backward in time, year by year, until a change of address or disappearance of the name signals a change in ownership.

The following list notes the changes in the basic format of the Springfield Directory over the years. The year of the first appearance of material is given, and unless otherwise noted, the material is still contained in the current directories.

1845-1848	includes Cabotville & Chicopee Falls Village
1849	includes Chicopee & Chicopee Falls
1859/60	first to give some house numbers
1862/63	first to have the list: "Streets, Places and Squares"
1863/64	first to have the list: "Banks, Blocks, Hotels and Insurance Companies"
1868/69	first to have a "Business Directory"; also an introduction entitled "The City, Its Government, Institutions, Societies and Objects of Note" (This introductory material has been in previous directories, but it wasn't collected together and so titled)
1870/71	almost all entries have a number with the street address; index to business ads
1875/76-1949	Chicopee & Chicopee Falls included in separate section
1875/76-1960	West Springfield included in separate section
1906-1960	Longmeadow included in separate section
1914	first to have a "House Directory": an alphabetical listing of streets with street numbers & residents
1969	first to have a "Telephone Numerical Directory"
1972	no directory published
1975	no directory published
1978	no directory published

An important addition to the Springfield Directory was made in 1914. This was the inclusion of a "House Directory", an alphabetical listing of streets with street numbers and residents. The House Directory has been continued to the

present and enables one to quickly find the resident(s) at a specific address. Generally, women and children are not listed unless they have an occupation, or the woman is a widow. Beginning in 1923 married women were noted in parentheses next to their husbands' names.

There are two earlier house directories, each published separately from the regular Springfield Directory. The first was printed in 1896 and the full title is very descriptive: "Springfield House Directory. 1896. Containing a List of the occupants of each residence and place of business, arranged in regular succession by numbers upon the streets; a Directory of the prominent Social Clubs; lists of Churches, Societies, Associations, etc.; Fire Alarm Telegraph; Public Parks; Blocks, Buildings, and Halls; Banks; Insurance Companies; Hotels; Express and Stage lines; Libraries; Cemeteries; Postal Information; Street Car routes; Carriage Fares". Volume 2, printed in 1909 has the same title.

There are some directories in the Spfld. Library's collection that cover suburban towns. These were published sporadically beginning in 1897/98, but most likely the best source for directories of towns other than Springfield are the libraries of the individual towns.

THESE COALS HAVE NO EQUAL | **J. M. COWAN** | for S
Domest

286 SPRINGFIELD [S] DIRECTORY.

CORNER BOOK STORE.

E. C. SHELDON,



Manufacturer of
Head Cheese, Pork and German Sausages,
Pure Leaf Lard and Hamerlott.
31 and 33 Bridge Street.
House 29 Bridge street.

Sheppard Harry, braken
H R R, boards 68 F
Shepperd William, car
house 59 Congress
Shereaux Joseph, engin
house W Springfiel
Sheridan James, emp E
Sheridan Patrick, emp
house 134 Ferry
Sherman A. F., house 3
Sherman Charles H., en
Co., boards Revere
Sherman Edwin C., emp
& Co., boards 32: 1
Sherman Edward, room
Sherman G. M. taxidern
& Barker Mfg Co.,
Sherman P. A., emp 1
house W Springfiel
Sherman Theo. P., emp
ing Box Co., boards
Sherman W. W., emp C
Blackman House
Sherman William, emp
Co., boards Blake
Sherman William P., en
& Son, house E Loi
Sherts Charles F., mach
boards 60 Bradford
Sherts Louis H., eng
Wesson, boards 60

Sheldon Le Grand C., builder, house 32
Bradford
Sheldon Ransom D., farmer, house
Hampden road
Sheldon S., emp Wason Mfg Co., boards
over office
Sheldon W. O., emp E. C. Sheldon,
boards 29 Bridge

III. Voting Lists

Another source of information about Springfield residents is the annual voting lists. These are divided into wards and precincts and give the names of all residents assessed for poll taxes. The individual ward and precinct lists are bound together into a single volume. The earliest volume in the Genealogy/Local History Dept. dates from 1884. The volume from 1885 is also in the collection, but the next two volumes, from 1886 and 1887 are not. Beginning with 1888 there is a complete collection, year by year through 1977, except for 1964, 1966 and 1976.

The earliest lists (1884-1890) contain alphabetical listings of residents with their street listing, then in numerical order each resident is listed by name, age, occupation and place of residence the previous year.

These voting lists are particularly useful in the period between 1884 and 1913 due to the lack of a House Directory in the Springfield Directories for those years. From 1914 on, the directories contain all of the information given in the voting lists, except ward and precinct designations and the age of the residents.

In using these lists one must remember that the voting age until very recently was 21, so that no one under that age will be listed. Also, it wasn't until 1918 that women were allowed to vote, so only men are listed before that year.

Between 1918 and 1928 separate voting lists were maintained for women, with the same set-up as the men's lists. In the collection are the "Listed Women" volumes from 1921 through 1928. Beginning in 1929 both men and women were listed in the same list. One other cautionary note is that some ward and precinct lines changed over time, so that it is necessary to be careful in searching for a specific address.

WARD 5—PRECINCT I.

9

Dartmouth Terrace

NO.	NAME.	AGE.	OCCUPATION.	RESIDENCE MAY 1, 1896.
7	Orlando M Baker	68	publisher	7 Dartmouth Ter J
7	Harris W Baker	28	manager	7 Dartmouth Ter J
15	James M Cowan	68	merchant	15 Dartmouth Ter J
15	J Edward Cowan	21	clerk	15 Dartmouth Ter J
21	Willis A Hall	41	manufacturer	21 Dartmouth Ter J
29	Albert D Nason	54	manufacturer	29 Dartmouth Ter J
29	Albert W Nason	20	student	29 Dartmouth Ter J
45	Herbert O Puffer	53	grain dealer	45 Dartmouth Ter J
63	Dwight O Warner	65	buyer	65 Dartmouth Ter J
63	Frank P Warner	28	clerk	63 Dartmouth Ter J
71	John Law	68	retired	104 Spring st I
83	Philip S Moxom	47	clergyman	83 Dartmouth Ter J
83	Philip W T Moxom	21	student	83 Dartmouth Ter J

"List of Persons Reported for the Assessment of a Poll Tax"
May 1, 1896 Ward 5 Precinct I p. 9

BUILDING RECORDS

Springfield Daily Republican

1859	Aug. 29, 1859	p. 4
1862	Nov. 8, 1862	p. 4
1863	Jan. 2, 1864	p. 1
1864	Dec. 3, 1864	p. 1
1865	Nov. 25, 1865	p. 1
1868	Jan. 18, 1869	p. 2
1869	Nov. 24, 1869	pp. 4 & 5
1872	Nov. 22, 1872	p. 5
1874	Nov. 16, 1874	p.8
1881	Jan 1, 1882 (<i>Sunday</i>)	p. 1
1882	Dec. 31, 1882 (<i>Sunday</i>)	p. 6
1883	Jan. 5, 1884	p. 3
1884	Jan. 5, 1885	pp. 5 & 6
1885	Dec. 31, 1885	pp. 2 & 3
1886	Jan. 1, 1887	p. 9
1887	Dec. 31, 1887	p. 11
1888	Jan. 1, 1889	pp. 2 & 3
1889	Jan. 1, 1890	pp. 2 & 3
1890	Jan. 1, 1891	pp. 2 & 3
1891	Jan. 1, 1892	pp. 2 & 3
1892	Dec. 31, 1892	p. 9
1893	Dec. 30, 1893	p. 9
1894	Dec. 29, 1894	p. 10
1895	Dec. 28, 1895	p. 4
1896	Dec. 31, 1896	p. 10
1897	Dec. 31, 1897	p. 10
1898	Dec. 31, 1898	p. 12
1899	Dec. 30, 1899	p. 5
1900	Dec. 31, 1900	p. 4
1901	Dec. 30, 1901	p. 4
1902	Dec. 29, 1902	p. 4
1903	Dec. 31, 1903	p. 6
1904	Dec. 31, 1904	p. 6
1905	Jan. 1, 1906	p. 6
1906	Dec. 31, 1906	p. 6
1907	Dec. 27, 1907	p. 6
1908	Dec. 28, 1908	pp. 6 & 7
1909	Jan. 2, 1910 (<i>Sunday</i>)	pp. 10 & 11
1910	Jan. 1, 1911 (<i>Sunday</i>)	pp. 6 & 7

1911	Dec. 31, 1911 (Sunday)	pp. 17-19
1912	Dec. 29, 1912 (Sunday)	pp. 17-20
1913	Dec. 28, 1913 (Sunday)	pp. 2-5
1914	Dec. 27, 1914 (Sunday)	pp. 14 & 15
1915	Jan. 2, 1916 (Sunday)	Section 2 pp. 2 & 3
1916	Dec. 31, 1916 (Sunday)	Section 2 pp. 2 & 3

Springfield Directories

1866-67 pp. 23-33
 1867-68 pp. 28-40

1870-71 pp. 17-24
 1871-72 pp. 19-31
 1872-73 pp. 17-35
 1873-74 pp. 23-45
 1874-75 pp. 410-413
 1875-76 pp. 410-416

**GAGNIER & ANGERS,
 Contractors, Builders, and
 Real Estate Dealers.**



"The Chateau," 278 rooms, 31 Maple St. One of our buildings, 1906.

Office, 327 Main Street,

WE FURNISH PLANS
 AND SPECIFICATIONS
 FREE.

OVER 500 BUILDINGS
 ERECTED TO DATE.

Buildings of every
 Description Erected.
 Houses and Blocks
 for Sale.

Investment Blocks
 A SPECIALTY.
SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

V. Example

I have chosen a late 19th century residence, 120 Westminster Street, to illustrate the methods used in researching buildings in Springfield.

Step One: Check atlases and maps:

- 1920 Atlas: plate 10-house shown; A.C. Hall listed as owner in index
- 1910 Atlas: plate 13-house shown; S.C. & B.J. Hall, owners
- 1899 Atlas: plate 13-house shown; Ada C. Hall, owner
- 1882 Atlas: pp. 64-65-no houses shown on West side of Westminster St. between Bay St. and St. James Ave.

Step Two: Check Springfield directories:

- 1899 pp. 217-218, no Ada C. Hall listed, however, Julia A. Hall, widow of Charles is listed at 120 Westminster
- 1898 pp. 202-203 no Halls listed at this address
- 1896 House Directory: p. 294, 120 Westminster St. "Cutler, William W., emp. Smith & Wesson, h. 120 Westminster"
- 1895 p. 110 "Cutler, William W., emp. Smith & Wesson, h. 120 Westminster"
- 1894 p. 106 "Cutler, William W., emp. Smith & Wesson, h. 579 State"

Step Three: Check voting lists:

- 1895 Ward 5 Precinct K p. 48 120 Westminster St.
William W. Cutler, 43 (age), mechanic, 579 State St. (res. 5-1-94)
- 1894 Ward 5 Precinct K p. 45 120 Westminster St. is not listed

Step Four: Check Springfield building records:

- 1895 Springfield Daily Republican Dec. 28, 1895, p. 4 "McKnightville is Growing": Westminster St., three people are listed, but not Mr. Cutler
- 1894 Springfield Daily Republican Dec. 29, 1894, p. 10 "The Armory Hill District": Westminster St. W.W. Cutler, 5000.

From the above steps we have determined that the house at 120 Westminster Street was built in 1894 at a cost of \$5000 for William W. Cutler, a mechanic employed by Smith & Wesson.

VI. Other Resources in the Genealogy/Local History Department

There are many other sources in this department that can be helpful for filling out the picture. The first one to check is the Springfield Index, a card catalogue that is alphabetically arranged and keys into scrapbooks, vertical files and books in the collection. Most common are newspaper obituaries of Springfield residents. These are usually the best (and sometimes the only) source of printed information about people.

The Picture Index is useful for finding illustrations of people as well as buildings. The collection is strongest in images of downtown and some of the major thoroughfares through Springfield.

For public buildings the annual Municipal Reports can provide very detailed information. From their beginning in 1852 until 1912 there are line-item expenditures detailing individuals, businesses and amounts. After 1912 the information is more general, but can still be very helpful as it is written every year.

EXPENDITURES.

Jefferson Avenue School-House (Unfinished).

L. H. Scott, on contract,	\$11,396 00
L. H. Scott, extra work,	52 90
Richmond & Seabury, supervisors of construction,	223 50
Kelley & Mellen, extra mason work,	266 61
R. F. Hawkins, Hennessey boiler, castings, etc.,	457 73
Phillips Manufacturing Co., steam heating apparatus, etc.,	978 89
Sackett & Reynolds, filling, grading, etc.,	908 04
W. F. Ferry, loam,	30 00
J. W. Adams & Co., trees, planting, etc.,	34 50
Springfield Gas Light Co., service pipe,	26 00
Sewer Department, making sewer connection,	73 02
Highway Department, laying sidewalk,	221 44
E. M. Elwell & Son, chandeliers, etc.,	96 40
Oliver & Howland, piping, etc.,	3 58
A. Handyside, plumbing,	9 87
Woods & Davis, laying walk,	12 00
Robert Alexander, gutters,	5 00
Moses Brown, cleaning windows,	15 00
Winchester Furniture Co., desks and chairs,	578 39
Meekins, Packard & Co., shades, making and hanging,	42 02
Wm. R. Hill, clocks,	12 00
The Union Newspaper Co., advertising,	1 26
	<hr/>
Total expenditure, 1889,	\$15,444 15
Amount expended in 1888,	4,003 66
	<hr/>
Total cost to date,	\$19,447 81

"Municipal Register of the City of Springfield for 1890" p. 419

VII. Sources Outside of the City Library

1. CITY HALL

City Clerk's Office: This office contains vital records for Springfield residents. Birth, marriage, and death records can be obtained here. A card file for each type of record since 1850 is maintained. Each file is alphabetically arranged and usually covers a decade. Thus it is necessary to have a good idea of the actual date for the person in question. Before 1850 the records have to be searched for in the original books, which are in very poor condition, and use is limited.

Building Department: This is where the building permits are kept. Remember, all of the building permits were destroyed in the 1905 City Hall fire and records weren't systematically kept and preserved again until 1910. Each permit is dated and contains the owner's name, builder's and architect's names; construction materials, dimensions, cost, and date of completion. A separate permit is kept for each addition or alteration to a structure, but all of the permits for a specific address are filed together. Permits for demolitions are kept separately. This department also has a photograph file, which was compiled during the late 1930's. Each structure in the city was photographed, and the prints were mounted on cards and filed alphabetically by their street address.

Water Department: Records are maintained here that give the date of the tie-in to Springfield's water system. This can be useful in dating buildings, but many of the older structures would have had wells before the tie-in with the municipal system.

Historical Commission: During the 1970's several individuals were hired by this office to research buildings and neighborhoods in Springfield in preparation for National Register of Historic Places nominations and Local Historic Districts. Much of this research is on file in this office. It usually contains the date of construction and name of the original owner.

2. HALL OF JUSTICE

Registry of Deeds: Land transactions from the 1630's to the present are on file here, and are contained in over 5000 volumes. Deeds are kept on a county level, but the definition of the county has changed over time. Originally, all of western Massachusetts (the present Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties) was contained in Hampshire County. Springfield and Northampton alternated as county seats for court functions. In 1761 Berkshire County was formed and since that date all of their land records have been stored in Pittsfield. In 1811 Franklin County was formed and since that date all of their land records have been stored in Greenfield. In 1812 Hampden County was formed and since that date all of their land records have been stored here in Springfield. Springfield also became the repository of the old Hampshire County land records (1636-1812), while Northampton has the land records for the new Hampshire County.

Deeds are indexed by Grantor (the individual selling the property) and by Grantee (the individual buying the property). These indexes are arranged chronologically and divided into several periods. The first covers from 1636 to 1800, while later ones only cover a decade.

If you're trying to date your own house or building you can begin with your deed and work backwards in time. Many deeds list from whom and when the grantor obtained the property. Then it's a simple matter of referring to the specific book and page given. If this information is not given, it's necessary to use the index. Check the grantee index for the appropriate periods to find from whom and when the person who sold you the property obtained it for himself.

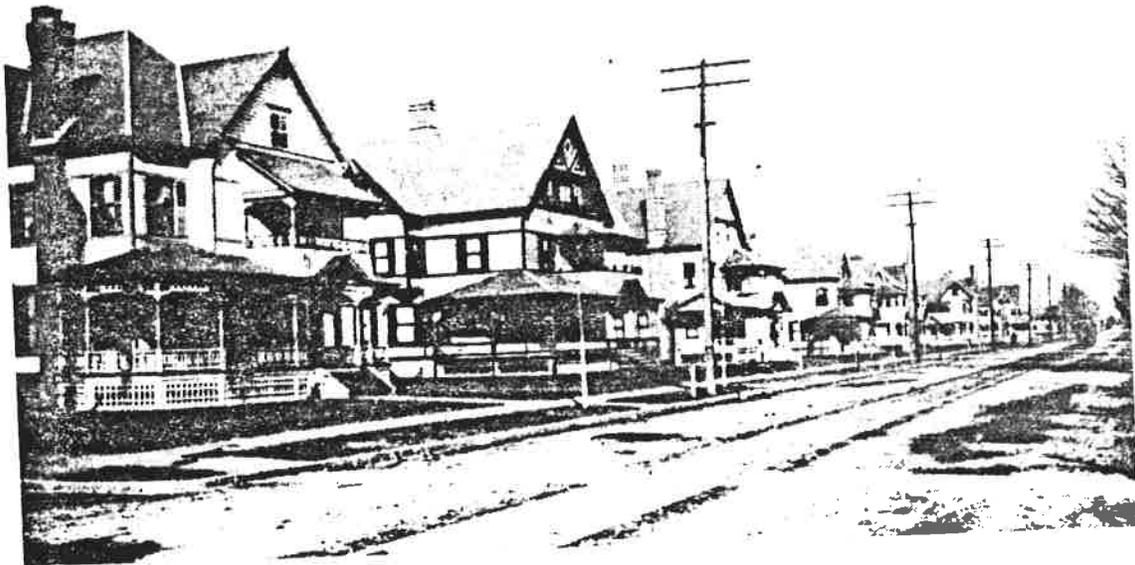
Deeds primarily give information about land. Buildings, if mentioned at all, are usually covered with a general statement. However, it is sometimes possible to find information about new buildings or additions in the deed. It's important to take down the relevant data from the deed, including the book and page number, names of the people involved, their place of residence, price of the transaction, description of the property and date of the deed.

In this way it is possible to trace a title back through time. Pay particular attention to changes in property lines, for these are often indications of the setting off of land for new construction. The chain of deeds may be broken by a will or series of wills. If you're stuck consider the Registry of Probate.

Registry of Probate: This office contains civil records, the most important of which are wills and divorces. A probate package will contain the deceased's last will and testament, inventory of the estate and its disposition, and statement of the executor. Inventories have changed over time. Those of the 17th and 18th centuries were very detailed, listing even small items like forks, nails and books. Later inventories are more general, but still helpful in rounding out a picture of the subject of interest.

Records are indexed alphabetically by name. They are stored in a vault, but will be brought up for your use. They are public records.

Probate records are kept on a county level. The records are kept in the county in which the individual dies. However, there have been changes in the county designations, so see the discussion under the Registry of Deeds heading. The only differences for probate records are that all the records from the old Hampshire County are kept in Northampton.



"Scene on St. James Avenue from Harvard"
from *Springfield Illustrated*, 1892

PROBLEMS AND THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Inaccuracies in the written record. Any individual source of information can be wrong. By using several sources the impact of the inaccurate data can be minimized.
2. Street numbering changes. This happened several times in downtown Springfield during the 19th and early 20th centuries. During the early 1870's almost all of the streets in the city were renumbered. As long as you're aware of this change it shouldn't create any problems.
3. No name listed on a map or atlas. Sometimes this problem can be solved by either using an earlier map or atlas, if a name is given there. The directories and voting lists can also help. If none of the above work, then a title search at the Registry of Deeds is necessary.
4. Incomplete building records. The building records in the newspapers were not always complete, particularly before the mid 1880's. However, you should still be able to narrow the range of years for original construction through the other documentary sources. Sometimes it just isn't possible, or practical, to obtain the exact year. Another problem with the newspaper records is that some of the construction activity is listed by the builder's or developer's name. When this occurs it is usually necessary to conduct a title search at the Registry of Deeds to establish the first true owner.
5. Different buildings on the same site. It must be remembered that most of this research helps you trace the history of a building on the site, not necessarily the same one that is currently standing. It's very helpful to develop an "eye" for styles. In architecture, as everything else, fashions change with time, and once you are aware of these changes, and when they occurred, you can quickly determine the relative age of a building. Check the references for books on Architecture and Style.
6. Buildings can be moved. If stylistic information tells you that the structure should be older than documentary evidence shows it to be, then it is a distinct possibility that the building was moved. During the 19th century many buildings were moved rather than demolished, often only a short distance.

These Books can be found in the Art and Music Dept. of the City Library.

Architecture and Style

- Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945* 720.973
John J. - G. Blumenson, 1977 B627i
- The American House* 728.6
Mary Mix Foley, 1980 + F699a
- Old House Plans. Two Centuries of American Domestic Architecture* 728.6
Lawrence Grow, 1978 + G919o
- The American Home. Architecture and Society, 1815-1915* 728.6
David P. Handlin, 1979 H192a
- A Field Guide to American Architecture* 720.973
Carole Rifkind, 1980 + R448f
- A Concise History of American Architecture* 720.973
Leland M. Roth, 1979 R742c
- American Shelter: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Home*, Lester Walker, 1981 728
+ W152a
- How Old is Your House? A Guide to Research* 728.6
Joan Webber, 1978 W386h
- American Architecture Since 1780 - A Guide to the Styles* 720.973
Marcus Whiffen, 1969 W576A
- A Guide to Old American Houses 1700-1900* 724.91
Henry Lionel Williams & O.K. Williams, 1962 + W672g

Physical Evidence (useful for pre 1840 houses)

- The Dating of Old Houses* 745.6
Henry C. Mercer, 1924 M53d

WORKSHEET FOR RESEARCHING SPRINGFIELD BUILDINGS

ADDRESS _____

CURRENT OWNER _____

RESEARCHER _____ DATE _____

I. Maps and Atlases

1920

1910

1899

1882

1875

1870

1860

1855

1851

1835

II. Directories

Year	Name	Address	Other Info.
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III. Voting Lists

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Other Info.</u>
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IV. Building Records

<u>Year</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Other Info.</u>
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