



Guide to Researching Your House

The Archives at Whitby Public Library has many resources to assist you with researching the history of your house. This guide explains the best sources for your research and the type of information you can expect to find. It's a good idea to write down the source, title, page number, microfilm reel number, or any other available references that will allow you to locate the information again, if necessary. Before beginning your research you will need to examine your deed or tax assessment to determine your property's lot and concession number or plan number.

Please keep in mind that some of these resources are located in our closed stacks and you will need to contact a staff member for assistance. Most of these resources are part of our non-circulating collections and will need to be used in the Library.

Building and Property Files

The Archives at Whitby Public Library may have files on specific buildings and properties. Files contain transcribed newspaper articles about events on or relating to the property, including real estate sales, fires, histories, and/or demolition information. You will need to know the address or the lot and concession number. These files are in the Archives, please contact staff for assistance with this resource. To determine whether or not a file exists for your property please consult the [Whitby Historic Buildings and Properties Index](#).

Photographs

Many of Whitby's historic homes have been photographed and digitized and are available through our [online database](#). You can search our website using keywords, addresses, and lot and concession numbers. If you don't find your house right away, try searching your street name. www.ourontario.ca/whitby

Maps and Atlases

Early atlases show the names of landowners, lot layout, and lot and concession numbers. We have two maps that may assist you in determining past ownership of your house. Consider these as a jumping off point to your research.

- Tremaine Map of Ontario County, 1860 hanging in the Archives and Local History Gallery
- Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Ontario, 1877 in the Archives and the atlas

stand on the Library floor [911.71355 JHB 1972](#)

Fire Insurance Plans

Fire insurance plans provide detailed information about buildings and neighbourhoods. They can be used to determine when a building was built or demolished, details of building materials, position of building on a lot, address numbers, and lot sizes and shapes. The Archives has fire insurance plans for downtown Whitby for the early 20th century. Please contact staff for assistance with this resource.

Directories

Town directories give the name and occupation of the head of the household, usually a male, at a given address. By finding the first year your home appears in the city directories, you can arrive at a probable date of construction. Working forward, you can compile a list of property owners and/or tenants. The earliest directories include information for all the municipalities in York and later, Ontario Counties. These directories only provide either the occupation or a lot and concession number.

- Vernon Directories, 1960-2002 Archives and Local History Gallery [917.13560025 Ver](#)
- 19th century County and Town directories Archives and Local History Gallery [971.356 Mis](#)

Preliminary Lists of Electors

Sometimes called Voters Lists, these resources contain the names and addresses of eligible voters within a particular area or polling station. They may be helpful in determining the residents of a home during an election year. Lists of Electors are similar to directories, however, since they list individuals alphabetically by polling station they are considerably less useful. It is also important to consider that eligible voters did not include women, minorities, and indigenous people until well into the 20th century. Preliminary Lists of Electors are located in the cabinets in the Archives and Local History Gallery. Please see staff for assistance. To view the records available for research please consult the following table. For more detailed information please click on the call numbers.

Call Number	Town of Whitby	Township of Whitby
324.640971356 Whi	1874-1970, various years	N/A
REF 324.640971356 Whi	N/A	1875-1967, various years
324.60971356 Vot	1886-1891, various years	1886-1891, various years

324.640971356 Whi	1949-1994, various years	N/A
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Land Abstract Indexes

The Land Abstract Indexes provide information about land transactions concerning a specific property over time. They identify when a mortgage was registered on a piece of property thereby providing clues as to possible dates of construction of structures. You will need to know your lot and concession number to use this resource. This resource is available on microfilm.

- [REF 346.7130438 ONT](#) **Reel 19:** Township of Whitby; **Reel 20:** Whitby Town East of Brock; **Reel 21:** Whitby Town West of Brock

Assessment Rolls

Assessment rolls were created to calculate property taxes each year in the Town and Township of Whitby. Assessment rolls can tell you the name and occupation of the head of a household or property owner. They also record the assessed value of a property which can help you determine if and when a house or other structure existed on the property. Assessment rolls for the Town and Township of Whitby are organized alphabetically by name of owner and/or tenant. Starting in the 1930s, assessment rolls became known as combined rolls; these include the assessed value and record the tax payments made by the owner. Combined rolls are organized into subdivisions and then alphabetically by owner and/or tenant. Please contact staff for assistance with these resources. To find out which years are available for research please consult the following table:

	Town of Whitby	Township of Whitby
Assessment Rolls	1855-1860; 1862-1873; 1875-1877; 1879-1880; 1882-1906; 1908-1915; 1917-1925; 1928-1930; 1949	1848; 1866; 1890-1914; 1916-1922; 1924-1931; 1934-1939; 1958-1962; 1965-1968
Combined Rolls	1931-1960	1932-1965

Township Papers

This collection, created by the Department of Lands and Forests, consists of miscellaneous records relating to land in Ontario. The documents have been arranged by township name,

then by concession and lot or by town name and lot number. This resource is available on microfilm.

- [REF 333.30971356 ONT MS 658 Reel 516](#)

Questions? Contact Us:

Email: archives@whitbylibrary.ca

Phone: 905-668-6531

Website: www.whitbylibrary.ca/archives

Hours

Monday to Friday 9:30 – 1:00 and 2:00 – 5:00; or by appointment.