

University District Community Association Guide to Researching the History of Your Home



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Resources at the Detroit Public Library Main Branch

A great place to start researching your University District home is the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library's Main Branch. They have a collection of city directories going back to the nineteenth century, you can use those to look up your home by address to find the names of its early owners.

<https://detroitpubliclibrary.org/research/burton-historical-collection>

Here are some guidelines for visiting the Burton, note that some days require appointments:

<https://detroitpubliclibrary.org/research/burton-historical-collection/reading-room-guidelines>

If you can learn the name of the architect who designed your home then librarians in the Music, Arts, and Literature Section can help you learn more about them, the Main Library's Music, Arts, and Literature Section has an index of architects, a large collection of books and periodicals about those architects, including the *Detroit Architect Journal*.

Resources available at any branch of the Detroit Public Library

Once you know the names of former owners of your home you can also use Ancestry.com to find out more about them, including in Census records up to 1950. Ancestry.com can be used via subscription, but you can also access it through Detroit Public Library computers if you have a library card, see this link for more information:

<https://detroitpubliclibrary.org/research/subject/biography-and-genealogy>

Websites with advice on searching US Census Records

The National Archives offers some advice on searching through census records and breaks down different ways to find the census by year:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/online-resources>

This blog article from the New York Public Library provides step-by-step advice on how to search census records if you only have a street address:

<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2016/07/08/genealogy-tips-searching-census-address>

Paid Databases

Newspapers.com is a database of newspapers that is another great resource for searching for references to your home, including past residents, but it requires a subscription to search. You can also search Ancestry.com from home with a paid subscription. They often offer 30-day free trials where you can temporarily sign up to do your home research.

Have any more questions about how to research the history of your home?

As a resident of the University District and a historian at Oakland University I am also happy to consult with you if you have more questions about researching the history of your home and its former owners. **You can email me, Erin Dwyer, at dwyer@oakland.edu**