



## RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR BUILDING

Material to aid your building research can be found at the Fort Collins Museum Local History Archive, the Fort Collins Library District (Reference, Non-Fiction, and Microfilm sections) and online at the archive website:

<http://www.history.fcgov.com> . The Archive is open Tuesday through Friday 10 to 5, Saturday 10-12 and 12:30 to 5, and Sunday 12- 5. Local History Collections are non-circulating, and can only be used in the Local History Archive.

**STEP 1: Look at City Directories to find the occupants of the building.** The directories are available for most years from 1902-2006 and often include all of Larimer County. They are indexed alphabetically by name, business, and street address. Look at the section where they list the streets and find your address. It will tell you who lived there, their occupations, and names of children, and the business owners. There are a few directories that do not have listings by streets--the 1904, 1906, 1907, and 1934. A 1902, 1904, and 1906 City Directory database is online; you can now search by street through this database.

**STEP 2: Look for information on your occupants in the Local History Books.** Five books provide major information on Fort Collins' people/buildings: *Fort Collins Yesterdays*, *Ranch Histories of Livermore and Vicinity* (978.868) and the three Larimer County history books (*History of Larimer County* 1911, 1985, and 1987 (978.8)). There are separate indexes for *Fort Collins Yesterdays* and *History of Larimer County 1911* which are filed with the books.

**STEP 3: Look for information on your building and its occupants in the Local History and Architecture Database.** Internet access is available at the computer work stations in the Main and Harmony Libraries, the Archive or from any computer connected to the Internet.

**STEP 4: Look for your occupants' names in Cemetery Records.** Fort Collins' **Grandview and Roselawn** Cemeteries' Records list name, age, and date of burial online and in book form (978.868 Cemeteries). When you find the date of burial, you can usually find an obituary in the microfilmed newspaper dated 3-4 days before the burial date. These obituaries can provide significant historical information about the residents/owners of your building.

**STEP 5: Look for the style of your building in *A Guide to Colorado Architecture* (720.9788). *The Old House Journal* and *Historic Preservation* magazines contain excellent articles on interior and exterior architectural styles. The current issues of *Old House Journal* and *Old House Interiors* are in the Library Periodical Section and back issues are housed at the Archive. Additionally, there are other architectural style reference books in the 720 to 728 section of the Non-Fiction areas of the Archive.**

**STEP 6: Search the Tax Assessor Records.** The Archive has a partial collection of Larimer County tax records dating from the 1940s to the 1970s with information and photographs of the property. Patrons need an address or legal location (township, range, and quarter section) to access these records. Many photographs from the 1948 and 1968 records are available in the **Local History and Architecture Database**. Click on the Photo Search Option and then **Advanced Search for Photos**. Enter your street name in **Keyword** and click on Tax Assessor Records in **All Collections**.

**STEP 7: Look at the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*.** These maps primarily depict the Old Town and early residential areas of Fort Collins during the years of 1886, 1891, 1901, 1906, 1909, 1925, and 1940 and are available at the Archive or online through the Library District website.

**Step 8: Look at the early newspaper indexes online and *The Coloradoan* newspaper card index from 1979-1987.** Microfilmed Fort Collins newspapers 1874 and 1878-present, *Wellington Sun* and *Triangle Review* are also available. See book indexes to *Wellington Sun* by A. Gonzales and the Colorado Newspaper Digitization Project for early Fort Collins newspapers online

## ADDITIONAL ARCHIVE RESOURCES

**Historic Photograph Collections** — Date from 1860s-present and include Larimer County and Fort Collins' businesses, residences, events, street scenes, and individuals. Order Forms for photographs are online.

**Oral History Transcripts** — Approximately 300 verbatim transcripts of interviews available for check-out and listed on the library's computer system. Topics include historical events, experiences of early pioneers and current residents, and Larimer County community histories. Excerpts from some interviews on Local Events and World War II are online.

**Biographical and Subject Files** — Provide index to files containing newspaper clippings, reports, and other documents pertaining to the history of local properties and individuals.

**Historical Maps**—Provide information on land ownership, boundaries, road and railroad routes, population statistics, agriculture, storm drainage, subdivision plats, etc. There are maps from 1914, 1915, 1940, 1956, 1959, 1968, and 1975 that detail property ownership of Larimer County farm land, and Fort Collins residential property ownership maps from 1894 and 1929.

**Obituary File** — Contains a copy of every obituary in *The Coloradoan* from 1977-present. Obituaries dated before 1977 must be searched for in the microfilmed newspapers. Some obituary information has been included in the biographical summaries of the People Database. Also the Coloradoan newspaper database has obituaries without the photographs dating from 1999-present.

**Historic Building Surveys and Contexts**--Provide historical and architectural data on various residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural buildings in Fort Collins. Often include title chains of the buildings, as well as biographical information on the owners. Some copies are available in Non-Fiction for check-out (978.868).

**Building Permit Records**--Provide construction dates from January 1920-December 1949. Entries are by date only, so may need to look through all entries for information. A database for these years is available online.

**Building Records** — Copies of building records that appeared in the newspapers at the end of each year. They give the location of new construction and often the name of the owner or the builder. These newspaper articles span the time period from 1878 to 1956. They are not available for every year and an incomplete database is online.

**Vertical File on Architects and Builders** — Contains a small collection of miscellaneous information on some local builders/architects. It is often difficult to find the builder/architect and usually the Building Permits or Building Records are the best source for that information. Check the Historical Guide to Colorado Architects.

## OTHER LOCAL HISTORY SOURCES

The offices of **Tax Assessor** and **County Clerk and Recorder** in the Larimer County Administration Building (200 W. Oak, Fort Collins, 80521, 970-498-7000) provide information on tax assessments (the Assessor's office) and deeds, mortgages, and sales (the Clerk's office) that pertain to a property from the 1860s-present. These will reveal who owned the property and for how long, how much the property cost, and can give valuable information about the homeowner of the deeds that have been filed on the property. Deeds are indexed by the names of the seller (grantor) and the buyer (grantee), so start with the most recent owner and transaction and work back through the years. When trying to determine the year a building was erected, there are a number of clues to look for. For example, a sizable increase in price from one transaction to the next suggests that there was some capital improvement on the land. Also, a large increase in the property taxes assessed suggests that some major improvement took place. Additionally, wills, probate records, and court litigation that may involve the property are filed with the District Court which is on the second floor of the Courthouse, 201 Laporte.

If money is no object, but time is, it is possible to have a title company do this research for you by providing you with the abstract for the property. This is basically the legal history of the property including the warranty deeds and deeds of trust that are available at the county clerk's office. Check the yellow pages under "Title Companies".