

# How to Research the History of a House

Researching the history of a house is a complicated, time-consuming endeavor. One could blithely tell a researcher to find the date the house was built, discover the list of ownership and flesh out the details with architectural designs and photographs; but it simply is not that easy. Information was compiled primarily from Jefferson M. Moak's Architectural Research in Philadelphia: a Guide to the Resources Available throughout Philadelphia which can be found in the Art and Maps departments of the Free Library of Philadelphia under the call number 720.9748 M11a. For more detailed instructions and examples of searches, it is advised to consult this resource directly.

## **Political Subdivisions of Philadelphia**

- Before 1854, most records of Philadelphia County are organized by township, borough or district.
- A movement to consolidate these various jurisdictions culminated with the passage of the Consolidation Act of 2 February 1854. So, after 1854 the method of division is the numbered ward, not the neighborhood
- Ward boundaries change over time. To determine the ward in which the building is located search the following resources:
  - Genealogy of Philadelphia County Subdivision published by the Philadelphia City Archives which can be found in the Government Publications Department of the Free Library of Philadelphia under Cities/P53-1268a and in the Maps Department under 912.7481 P5392g
  - Philadelphia Maps published by the Genealogy Society of Pennsylvania which can be found in the Government Publications Department of the Free Library of Philadelphia under 912.7481 P53995m and Gov Pubs Soc. GSP-1:M322
  - Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network website at [www.philageohistory.org](http://www.philageohistory.org) which contains thousands of old maps, property atlases, city directories, industrial site surveys, and other items documenting the history, growth, and development of the city from the 1600s through today.

## **Maps & Atlases**

- Land Ownership & Fire Insurance Atlases
  - Once you have determined the ward, check Jefferson M. Moak's Atlases of Pennsylvania in the Maps Department of the Free

- Library of Philadelphia under 016.912 M71a for a complete listing of the real estate atlases and the institutions which hold them.
- Locate the house on a map. Start with a current map such as a Sanborn Insurance Map and consult maps backward until the house has disappeared. This will give you a general time frame in which the house may have been built.
  - City atlases began being published in 1860. Two valuable resources which predate the atlases are Charles Ellet, Jr.'s Map of the county of Philadelphia and Lake & Beers' Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia. The major holdings of these atlases are at the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Historical society of Pennsylvania.
  - An online resource with a wealth of geographical information, including Ellet's and Lake & Beers' maps, is the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network. Go to [www.philageohistory.org](http://www.philageohistory.org) and click on Interactive Maps viewer.
  - Survey Records
    - The Philadelphia City Archives has available surveys for the following:
      - The 3<sup>rd</sup> Survey District of Philadelphia which covers the original city from Vine to South Sts, river to river and spans 1780-1917.
      - Southwark from 1785-1870
      - Northern Liberties and Kensington circa 1828
  - Quarter Sessions Court Road Dockets & Petitions
    - These papers relate to the opening of streets, roads, bridges and parks
    - These petitions and drafts are useful for the outlying areas of old Philadelphia County in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century as they form one of the few extent cartographic records of the period.
  - Street Name Changes
    - In 1858 and 1897, the City of Philadelphia imposed radical changes to the street names of Philadelphia in order to eliminate duplicate street names and to standardize the name of a street in relation to the major streets throughout the city.
    - For a comprehensive listing of street name changes consult Jefferson M. Moak's Philadelphia Street Name Changes located in the Government Publications, Maps and Social Science & History departments of the Free Library of Philadelphia under the call number 917.4811 P53mo2.
    - A comparison between the complete city atlases of 1895 and 1901 will reveal most of the name changes which occurred in 1897.
    - Online resources to utilize are:

- Philadelphia Historic Streets Index: Go to [www.phillyhistory.org](http://www.phillyhistory.org). Click the Link tab then click DOR Historic Street Index. Type a street name in the search box for a list of name changes.
- Current Street Map: Go to [www.philageohistory.org](http://www.philageohistory.org). Click on Interactive Maps Viewer then click on Current Street Map.
- Street Positioning & House Numbering
  - Above and below a street does not refer to the geographical points of North, South, East and West. Rather, it refers to the numerical designations of the blocks. For example, the 200 block of Market Street is Market Street, below 3<sup>rd</sup>; the 300 block of Market Street is Market Street, above 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - The entire city was renumbered under the Ordinance of 1856.
  - The Board of Revision of Taxes undertook two additional renumbering projects in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
    - Kensington during the 1880s
    - Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill during the 1890s. Compare city atlases of 1889 and 1899 to discover block changes

### **Deed, Registry & Will Records**

Once a person has tackled their work with maps and atlases, he or she should tackle a list of ownership which is necessary in pursuing additional research. The easiest way would be to start with the current owner and work backwards. The following records show the different ways in which land can be transferred and the various ways in which this information has been recorded:

- Board of Revision of Taxes database
  - Shows current assessments, address of property, name of last recorded owner and date of last recorded deed or transfer
  - Go to the <http://brtweb.phila.gov> and click on property search.
- Computer Recording and Indexing (1976-Present)
  - Philadox, available for free in Rm. 154 City Hall, is a computer program capable of searching all recorded instruments since 1976 by address, name of owner or tax parcel number.
  - Follow the directions on the screen to get a listing of all deeds and mortgages associated with a property since 1976.
  - For earlier deeds, request a copy from the people at the counter by giving them the deed book and page number.
  - Deed book and page designations were discontinued in Philadelphia on December 6, 1999 and only a document number is used to identify recorded instruments after that date.

- To continue research into earlier records, it is important to locate the registry plan and plot numbers. Although transfer microfilm jackets were discontinued in 1989-1990, each deed continues to be indexed with these numbers which is marked at the top of the first page. One can use the Philadox system to locate the present deed, if it has been scanned, and note the numbers at the top of this deed to retrieve the plan and plot numbers.
- Transfer Sheets and Microfilm Jackets
  - The city is divided into a grid pattern and plan numbers assigned to each space of the grid.
  - The plot numbers within the plan will have no relation to the assigned house number. Plot numbers will be altered whenever the property boundaries are redrawn.
  - When you have reached the first transfer sheet of the microfiche you are using, check to see if it says "original" at the bottom of the sheet. If it does, you would then go to grantor/grantee indices to find the actual deed on microfilm in order to continue the chain of title.
  - If it says "subdivision of number \_\_", you would then request that plot number for the same plan and continue your search through the transfer sheets.
- Grantor/Grantee Indices
  - The grantor (seller) and grantee (buyer) indices are organized by first letter of last name for the volume and first letter of the first name within the volume.
  - The Department of Records digitized all of the grantor/grantee books in 2002. These are available in Rm. 154 City Hall.
- Online Registry Office records
  - In 1865, the main purpose of the Registry Office was to produce accurate lists and plans of current property owners which served the basis upon which real estate taxes would be assessed.
  - Today, the Registry Office records serve as a location index to virtually all property ownership changes in the City of Philadelphia since 1865.
  - There are 2 sets of Registry Office records available online. Using these sources, it is possible to trace the ownership of any given property in the City of Philadelphia between 1865 and 1955.
    - Historic Registry of Maps  
<http://citymaps.phila.gov/portal>
    - Registry Ledgers  
<http://philadox.phila.gov>
- Deed Books
  - The deed books are organized chronologically as the deeds are recorded, not chronologically according to the date of the deed.

Often months or years would pass between the execution of a deed and the act of recording in the city's records deeds books

- Prior to 1777, the deed books are organized on an alphanumerical basis starting with the letter "E" and progressing to the letter "I".
- From 1777-1700, the deed books were kept in a numerical progression
- In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, these numerical deeds were prefaced with the letter "D"
- From 1799-Present, the books are kept in an alphanumerical system
- The deeds are divided into several major parts:
  - Opening paragraph with the date of the deed, names of the parties and the consideration
  - Body of the deed with the description of the property being sold, the covenants and the signatures
  - Some deeds also state conditions and agreements
- After the description, there should be the phrase "Being the same property which (name) sold to (name) on (date) and recorded in Deed Book (series, number, page)." If this recital clause is included, the need to continue checking grantor/grantee indices for deed book citations is eliminated.
- Due to discrepancies between the execution of a deed and when it was actually recorded, many researchers may mistakenly assume the deed was never recorded. Continue checking the indices for at least 25 years after the date of the deed.
- Online Recorder of Deeds Deed Books document property ownership in the City of Philadelphia between 1669 and 1974.
  - Records are held and made available by the City Department of Records.
  - Philadelphia Deed Book Indices are the key to locating any recorded deed. [http://philadox.phila.gov/phillyhistorical\\_index/index.html](http://philadox.phila.gov/phillyhistorical_index/index.html)
  - The Department of Records Historical Land and Vital Records System has scans of over 18 million images from the microfilm of all the Philadelphia Recorder of Deed and Department of Records deed books from 1683 -1974. Access is available upon a subscription basis. <http://philarecords.com/historic-records/web>
- Court Deeds, Indices and Orders
  - Sheriff's Deed & Indices
    - Many people lost their ownership rights to property through court action, in which the sheriff seizes the property and sells it to satisfy a debt.

- There are 2 county courts in which most such actions were handled
    - Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, 1736-1905
    - Philadelphia County District Court, 1811-1874
    - All of these records are located at the Philadelphia City Archives
- Partition Deeds
  - When a large estate is broken up among several heirs, the heirs sometimes cannot agree upon a fair and equitable arrangement of division. They then petition the court to appoint an arbitrator to create such a division and agree to abide by the court's decision. There are indices for these deeds.
- Orphans Court Deeds & Records
  - Orphans Court has jurisdiction over most matters of estate administration, including the estates of decedents, trusts, minors and incapacitated persons. All filings are made in City Hall, Rm. 415.
- Condemnation
  - Condemnation is the use of the constitutional power of eminent domain by a public body to acquire title to real estate needed for a public purpose.
  - A statement or copy of this transfer is entered into the deed records of the Philadelphia Department of Records.
  - Many condemnation proceedings do not yield the information regarding any previous transfer of the property so one will have to look at the various grantee books to find when the person losing the land under condemnation proceedings may have acquired it.
- Wills and Administrations
  - Will and administration records are held by the Philadelphia Register of Wills.
  - For information on fees, forms and hours go to <http://secureprod.phila.gov/wills/>
  - Indexes for the wills and administrations are in Rm. 185-187, City Hall.
  - Wills may be viewed on microfilm at City Hall in Rm. 185-187
  - Administrations can only be accessed at 3101 Market St. (Go to the City Archive Reading Room and use the telephone to contact the Register of Wills Archive which is located in the basement.)
  - The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania has abstracted the wills of Philadelphia County from 1683-1825.

- Patents, Warrants & Surveys
  - Any land grant from William Penn, his commissioners and agents, or from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is called a "patent".
  - Although these are state records, the City Archives has the patents on microfilm.
- Exemplifications
  - Exemplification is a legal term meaning "a true copy".
  - When the state government moved from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, many Philadelphia land records transcribed into state books by mistake left Philadelphia. These records, which include patents, deeds, mortgages, letters of attorney, etc, are located in 14 volumes marked either "Exemplifications" or "Letters of Attorney".
  - Two indices are available from the records in the Exemplification series:
    - Guide to the Sale of Commonwealth Property in Philadelphia County, 1780-1798 published by the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania
    - Guide to the Philadelphia Exemplification Records Series... 1669-1838 available at the Philadelphia City Archives
- Mortgages
  - Mortgage records are instrumental in ascertaining construction of a house on a property or in jumping a break in the chain of the title.
  - From 1723-1755, the Provincial Assembly established a General Loan Office for certain mortgages granted by the Provincial Government. An index to the entire General Loan Office series, whose books are both at the City Archives and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, is entitled Guide to the Mortgages of the General Loan Office of the Province of Pennsylvania, 1724-1756
- Fairmount Park Deeds and Titles
  - The City Archives possesses the actual deeds and titles to all properties within Fairmount Park and to all properties outside of Fairmount Park acquired by the City of Philadelphia between 1683 and 1951 as part of the creation of the park.
  - The index for the Fairmount Park properties is available in the Archive's Reading Room.
  - Each folder is indexed by the name of the owner from whom the Park commission acquired the property, not by the name of the most famous owner or occupant.

- City-owned Property Deeds and Titles
  - All properties purchased by the City of Philadelphia have files containing the deed to the property, title papers, many older deeds, and, if owned by the 1930s, a chain-of-title prepared by the W.P.A.
  - Property records held by the City Archives includes most properties owned by the City of Philadelphia or the School District of Philadelphia prior to 1952.
  - Card indices exist for the city-owned property and are arranged by name of seller, by street location and by type of structure erected or use of the property by the city.
  - No index exists for the school property files which are arranged alphabetically by the name of the school.
- Briefs of Title
  - Published and manuscript briefs of title exist for many Philadelphia properties, in addition to those found in the Fairmount Park papers.
  - These were generally prepared during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and contain the history of every transaction which affected the property from William Penn to the date of publication or compilation.
  - The major collections of published briefs exist at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- Philadelphia Historical Commission
  - The Philadelphia Historical Commission is the City's historic preservation office. It designates properties as historic and maintains files on all buildings so designated.
  - It also possesses copies of all nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, both individual buildings and historic districts.
  - For more information about the Commission, one can visit the Commission's website at [www.phila.gov/historical](http://www.phila.gov/historical)
  - A searchable database of properties designated by the Philadelphia Historical Commission through 1986 is available at [www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/phc/PHCdefault.htm](http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/phc/PHCdefault.htm)
  - The Philadelphia Historical Commission is a joint partner with the Athenaeum on its Philadelphia Architects and Buildings website. Go to [www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org)

### **Building Permits**

- All permits prior to July 1889 are lost.
- Starting in 1895, two forms were used; one for construction of a new building and the other for repairs, alterations, additions, etc.

- An index of permits covering 1906-1966 is available at the Central Electrical Section of the Department of Licenses and Inspections in the Concourse level of the Municipal services Building at 15<sup>th</sup> St. & JFK Blvd.
- Actual permits are now in the collection of the Philadelphia City Archives located at 3101 Market St.
- The 1906-1966 index, known to L&I clerks as “building history cards” is organized alphabetically by street.
- Important facts to glean from building history cards are the address, year and number of permit issued and types of work which the permit allowed.
- An invaluable online resource is the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project (PAB), an internet database of architectural and historical information and images for 35,000+ structures, mostly in Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties, including all those on the Philadelphia Historical Commission list of significant buildings, and the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission’s inventory of historic structures. Go to [www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org).

### **Architectural Plans**

- Most architectural plans submitted to the city of Philadelphia for its approval before construction were destroyed 5-10 years after the construction of the house.
- The major architectural archives in Philadelphia are:
  - The Athenaeum of Philadelphia
  - Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania
  - Historical Society of Pennsylvania
- Most of the collections are indexed by the name of the client, not by the street address.
- If the architect of your building is known, check the *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930* Sandra L. Tatman located in the Free Library's Art Department under the call number, 720.922 T188b or [www.Phiлаathenaeum.org](http://www.Phiлаathenaeum.org) to ascertain whether your building is among the architect's known works.
- The Historical American Buildings Survey (HABS) has been recording buildings through measured drawings and photographs for over seventy years. The HABS inventory was published in 1974 and 1980 as *Philadelphia Preserved* by Richard J. Webster; copies are located in the Free Library's Art and Picture Departments under the call number, 720.9748 P53pr2. To view more recent listings, go to [www.nps.gov/history](http://www.nps.gov/history). Original drawings of by the Old Philadelphia Survey of the 1930s are located at the Free Library of Philadelphia in the Reference Stacks under the call number A720.9748 Am311.

## **Fire Insurance Surveys**

- Researchers will find a wealth of information about properties recorded in fire insurance surveys such as: types of structure, building materials, ownership, and drawings.
- A large number of insurance surveys are now in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Go to [www.hsp.org](http://www.hsp.org) and [www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/ffi/ffidefault.htm](http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/ffi/ffidefault.htm)
- Other collections of fire insurance policies and surveys are held by their originating companies or their successors.
- In 1752, Benjamin Franklin joined a group of prominent citizens to establish what is now the oldest property insurance company in the country. He named the company The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire. To view their surveys go to [www.contributionship.com](http://www.contributionship.com). Click on About, and then click on Archives.

## **Census Records**

- For the purpose of assigning seats of Congress, the U.S. Government takes a census of the population every ten years, starting in 1790.
- Starting in 1880, the census included more information than just the name of the head of the household and the number of occupants. By locating the subject house within the census, the researcher can discover who resides there on enumeration day, whether the house was rented or owned by the occupant, and other information about the occupants.
- Every census is available to the public, except for the 1890 census which was destroyed by fire. For information go to [www.census.gov/regions/philadelphia](http://www.census.gov/regions/philadelphia).
- There is no index to the 1930 Pennsylvania census. You will have to rely upon the 1930 city directory located in the Free Library's Newspaper and Microfilm Center to get a street address, match this address with the appropriate census enumeration district, and then go through several pages of that enumeration district to find your property.
- There are three guides to the enumerations districts of the 1880, 1910 and 1930 censuses:
  - *An Urban Finding Aid for the 1880 Federal Population Census of Philadelphia* by Walter D. Stock and Nesheena Pickron located in the Government Publications, Maps, and Social Sciences History departments of the Free Library under the call number, 304.6021 St62u
  - *Philadelphia Enumeration Districts of 1910* by Susan S. Koelble and Kristin K. Bryson located in the Government

- Publications and Maps departments of the Free Library under the call number, 917.4811 K818p
- *Philadelphia Enumeration Districts of 1930* by Koelble & Bryson located in the Government Publications department under the call number, 917.4811 K818p3

## **Directories**

- City & Business directories
  - Once the names of the owners of a property have been ascertained from the chain-of-title, the researcher can check these names in the city directory to determine whether they occupied the property and when they first appeared at that address.
  - The Philadelphia City Directories are an alphabetical listing of residents of the city, giving their occupation and address. They were published between 1785 and 1935. The information in a published directory is current for the previous year.
  - Complete runs of city and business directories are available on microfilm in the Newspaper & Microfilm Center of the Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia City Archives, and Historical society of Pennsylvania.
- Cole's Cross Reference Directory
  - Also known as a reverse directory, this resource is a numerical listing of street addresses within the city, giving the resident's name, phone number and length of time at that address.
  - Copies are available on microfilm from 1973-2007 in the Newspaper & Microfilm Center of the Free Library of Philadelphia.
- Philadelphia Blue Books
  - The *Philadelphia Blue Book* is Philadelphia's Social Register.
  - Generally, these were published annually from 1880-1927.
  - They contain an alphabetical listing, a listing by street address, a listing of club membership, and the house name if it had one.
  - The largest collection of Blue books is owned by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Some volumes not in their collection may be found at the Free Library of Philadelphia's Newspaper & Microfilm Center and the Germantown Historical Society.
- Telephone Directories
  - One may want to consult the telephone books occasionally to determine the residence of an owner of a property, especially during the middle and late 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - The Free Library of Philadelphia has complete sets of Philadelphia telephone books from 1874-present on microfilm in the Newspaper & Microfilm Center.

## **Photographs & Prints**

- The major photographic collections in Philadelphia are owned by the following agencies:
  - Free Library of Philadelphia, Print & Picture Department
  - Philadelphia City Archives
  - Historical Society of Pennsylvania
  - Temple University, Urban Archives
  - Library Company of Philadelphia
  - Athenaeum of Philadelphia

## **Philadelphia Architects & Building Project**

- The Philadelphia Architects and Building Projects (PAB) provides the following resources:
  - A free, publicly searchable internet database of architectural and historical information and images for thousands of structures in Philadelphia and the surrounding Pennsylvania counties.
  - Images of many structures, including most existing original architectural documents of Philadelphia area buildings before 1900 and representative images from 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.
  - Biographies of architects and architectural firms.
  - An architectural and building history component to the region's growing Geographical Information System (GIS) which provides the ability to link authoritative geographical coordinates with a wide, potentially limitless variety of information.
  - [www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org)

## **Other Records & Information**

- Tax Records
  - The Philadelphia City Archives possesses tax records for many of the city wards and county townships and boroughs for the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Much of the Philadelphia city and county tax record from the Direct Tax of 1798 still exists and is available at both the National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Regional Branch, the Historical society of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia City Archives.
  - Income tax records of the Civil War period are available at the National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Regional Branch
- Mechanic Liens
  - Contractors had the right to sue if the owner or other responsible party failed to pay them for work performed.

- A search through the liens during the time period in which a building was erected may elicit entries about the building, revealing the names of the contractors and some of the suppliers.
  - Liens were filed in both the Common Pleas Court and the Philadelphia County District Court from 1836-1874.
- Builders Contracts
  - Actions were sometimes taken to prevent the filing of mechanical liens.
  - Agreements between the owner and contractor from 1895-1907 for the construction of buildings within Philadelphia were recorded with the Common Pleas Court.
- Pennsylvania Archives
  - Many early tax lists and records regarding the confiscation of property are available at the Free Library of Philadelphia's Social Science and History Department under the call number 917.4811fF 775n, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania.
  - The City Archives has a complete set of the Colonial Records and the Pennsylvania Archives.
- Publications & Newspapers
  - Between 1886 and the 1942, the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* (later just known as the *Builders' Guide*) provided in-depth coverage of the construction trades of Philadelphia. These can be found on microfilm in the Newspaper & Microfilm Center of the Free Library of Philadelphia.
  - Other works with pictures and information about buildings, especially for architect-designed properties, include:
    - *Architectural Record* issues can be found in the Reference Stacks of the Free Library.
    - Moses King's *Views of Philadelphia* (1901)
    - Germantown Independent-Gazette's *Handsome Homes of Germantown, Mount Airy and Pelham* (1899). The art supplement can be found in the Reference stacks of the Free Library under A917.481 G31.
    - *Germanopolis* (1908) can be found in the Maps department of the Free Library of Philadelphia under the call number 917.481 G317g.
- Bankruptcy Record
  - There may be relevant information found in bankruptcy papers regarding a building and/or its contents.
  - Bankruptcies were filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern district of Pennsylvania. The records of that court are located at the National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Regional Branch.

- Calendar
  - Prior to 1752, the English-speaking world used the Julian calendar, not the Gregorian calendar. You must remember to convert dates written in longhand prior to 1752.
  - In the Julian calendar March 25 was the first day of a new year, March was the first month.
- Common Abbreviations and Definitions
  - The following abbreviations are commonly encountered, especially in the indices of the city records:
    - do. (Ditto)
    - et. Al. (and others, et alia)
    - et. Ux. (and wife, et uxor)
    - Jas. (James)
    - Jno. (John)
    - sd. (said, i.e. aforesd = aforesaid)
    - ye. (the)
    - &c. (Et cetera)

### **Institutions Which Hold Records of Architectural Value**

- **ACE USA** (Insurance Company)  
 Two Liberty Place  
 1601 Chestnut Street  
 Philadelphia PA 19192-2067  
 215-761-5273  
[www.ace-ina.com](http://www.ace-ina.com)
- **Architectural Archives**, University of Pennsylvania  
 Kroiz Gallery of the Architectural Archives  
 Lower level of the Fisher Fine Arts Library  
 220 S 34<sup>th</sup> St.  
 Philadelphia PA 19104  
 Mailing address: Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania  
 Meyerson Hall, 102  
 Philadelphia PA 19104  
 215-898-8323 (research by appointment only)  
*Hours:* Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm  
[www.upenn.edu/gsfa/archives/archives/index.html](http://www.upenn.edu/gsfa/archives/archives/index.html)
- **Athenaeum of Philadelphia**  
 219 S 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Philadelphia PA 19106  
 215-925-2688 (research by appointment only)  
*Hours:* M-F 9:00am-5:00pm, First Saturdays 10:00am-2:00pm  
[www.philaathenaeum.org](http://www.philaathenaeum.org)
- **Chestnut Hill Historical Society**  
 8708 Germantown Avenue

Philadelphia PA 19118

215-247-0417

E-mail: [info@chhist.org](mailto:info@chhist.org)

*Hours:* Tuesday-Friday 9:30am-2:30pm, most Saturdays 11:00am-4:00pm (appointments preferred) Admission & research fee \$15 for non-members, free for members

[www.chhist.org](http://www.chhist.org)

- **Free Library of Philadelphia**

1901 Vine Street

Philadelphia PA 19103

Government Publications Department 215-686-5330

*Hours:* Monday-Thursday 9:00am-9:00pm, Friday 9:00am-6:00pm, Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 1:00-5:00pm

Map Collection 215-686-5397

*Hours:* Monday-Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm

Newspaper & Microfilm Center 215-686-5342

*Hours:* Monday-Friday 9:00am-6:00pm, Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 1:00pm-5:00pm

Print & Picture Department 215-686-5405

*Hours:* Monday-Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm

Social Science & History Department 215-686-5396

*Hours:* Monday-Thursday 9:00am-9:00pm, Friday 9:00am-6:00pm, Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 1:00pm-5:00pm

[www.freelibrary.org](http://www.freelibrary.org)

- **Germantown Historical Society**

5501 Germantown Avenue

Philadelphia PA 19144

215-844-1683

E-mail: [info@germantownhistory.org](mailto:info@germantownhistory.org)

*Hours:* Tuesday 9:00am-1:00pm, Thursday 1:00pm-5:00pm \$7.50 for non-members, free for members

[www.germantownhistory.org](http://www.germantownhistory.org)

- **Historical Society of Pennsylvania**

1300 Locust Street

Philadelphia PA 19107

215-732-6200

*Hours:* Monday closed, Tuesday 12:30-5:30pm, Wednesday 12:30-8:30pm, Thursday 12:30-5:30pm, Friday 10:00am-5:30pm (Last admittance to building at 4:45pm & 7:45pm)

[www.hsp.org](http://www.hsp.org)

- **National Archives & Records Administration**, Mid-Atlantic Region

9<sup>th</sup> & Market Streets (entrance on Chestnut St.)

Philadelphia PA 19107

215-606-0100

E-mail: [Philadelphia.archives@nara.gov](mailto:Philadelphia.archives@nara.gov)

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00am-5:00pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month  
8:00am-4:00pm

[www.archives.gov/facilities/pa/philadelphia\\_center\\_city.html](http://www.archives.gov/facilities/pa/philadelphia_center_city.html)

[www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) (for main NARA homepage)

- **Philadelphia City Archives & Department of Records**

Suite 150

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215-685-9400 voicemail

215-685-9401 receptionist

E-mail: [records.info@phila.gov](mailto:records.info@phila.gov) or [archives@phila.gov](mailto:archives@phila.gov)

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00pm

[www.phila.gov/Records/Archives/Archives.html](http://www.phila.gov/Records/Archives/Archives.html)

<http://phila-records.com/historic-records/web/> (database)

- **Philadelphia Contributionship**

212 S 4<sup>th</sup> Street

Philadelphia PA 19106

215-627-1752

E-mail: [info@contributionship.com](mailto:info@contributionship.com)

[www.contributionship.com](http://www.contributionship.com)

- **Philadelphia Historical Commission**

Room 576, City Hall

Philadelphia PA 19107

215-686-7660

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00pm

[www.phila.gov/historical](http://www.phila.gov/historical)

- **Philadelphia Register of Wills**

Room 180, City Hall

Philadelphia PA 19107

215-686-6250

E-mail: [rowonline@phila.gov](mailto:rowonline@phila.gov)

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00am-4:00pm

<http://secureprod.phila.gov/wills/>

Wills Archives

3101 Market Street (Go to City Archives)

- **Urban Archives**, Temple University

Paley Library

13<sup>th</sup> Street & Berks Mall

Philadelphia PA 19122

215-204-8257

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00pm

[www.library.temple.edu/urbana/INDEX.HTM](http://www.library.temple.edu/urbana/INDEX.HTM)

**Other Web Sites of Interest:**

- Board of Revised Taxes  
<http://brtweb.phila.gov/>
- City Maps  
<http://citymaps.phila.gov/portal>
- Fire Insurance Records Database  
[www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/ffi/ffidefault.htm](http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/ffi/ffidefault.htm)
- Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania  
[www.genpa.org](http://www.genpa.org)
- Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network  
[www.philageohistory.org](http://www.philageohistory.org)
- National Park Service  
[www.nps.gov/history](http://www.nps.gov/history)
- Philadelphia Cultural Resources Geographic Information System CRGIS  
<https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/ce>SelectWelcome.asp>
- Philadelphia Architects and Buildings  
[www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org)
- Philadelphia Historical Commission  
[www.phila.gov/historical/](http://www.phila.gov/historical/)
- Philadelphia Historical Commission Database of Designated Properties in the City of Philadelphia  
[www.brynmawr.edu.iconog/phc/PHCdefault.htm](http://www.brynmawr.edu.iconog/phc/PHCdefault.htm)
- Philadox  
<http://philadox.phil.gov/phillyhistoricalindex/index.html>
- PhillyHistory  
[www.phillyhistory.org](http://www.phillyhistory.org)
- Places in Time: Historical Documentation of Place in Greater Philadelphia  
[www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/frdr.html](http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/frdr.html)
- U.S. Census Bureau, Philadelphia Region  
[www.census.gov/regions/Philadelphia/](http://www.census.gov/regions/Philadelphia/)