

Who Walked These Streets?

How to Build an Online Platform for Historic Neighborhood Research

Elizabeth Hodges MA, MSLIS – Senior Genealogy Librarian

The Genealogy Center – Genealogy@ACPL.info

As family historians, we truly love stories. Underneath every layer of paint, wallpaper, or linoleum flooring of every house or apartment building there is the story of generations of people's lives that we have yet to uncover.

Our Example Website: <https://www.mappingwilliamswoodlandpark.com>

Setting Up Your Google Site

1. Plan Your Site

- Purpose: What do you want to achieve with this site? (e.g., share research, collaborate with others, create a resource for the community)
- Content: What types of information will you include? (e.g., maps, photos, documents, oral histories)
- Organization: How will you structure your site? (e.g., by address, by family, by time period)
- Audience: Who are you creating this site for? (e.g., the public, other researchers, family members)

2. Create a Google Site

- Go to <https://sites.google.com/>: Sign in with your Google account.
- Click "Create" in the top left corner.
- Choose a template or start blank: For historical research, a simple template or a blank site might be best.
- Name your site: Choose a clear and descriptive name.
- Optional: Create a domain name.
 - There is absolutely nothing wrong with using the free domain that Google creates for you, but if you'd like to create a custom domain take a look at the following links:
 - <https://youtu.be/675AsluEsSw?si=spbvHu9QW2JHlpoE>
 - <https://support.google.com/sites/answer/9068867?hl=en>

3. Organize Your Content

- Create pages: Organize your site with pages for different topics or sections. Consider creating a page for each address in your neighborhood.

- Add text, images, and files: Upload your research materials directly to the site or link to files in your Google Drive.
- Embed content: Embed maps, videos, and other media to enhance your site.

4. Link to Google Drive Folders

- Create a Google Drive folder: Create a folder for each address in your neighborhood and organize your research materials within those folders.
- Get the folder's shareable link: Make sure the folder is shared with the appropriate audience (e.g., public, specific people).
- Add the link to your Google Site: You can add the link as text, a button, or embed the folder directly onto the page.

5. Enhance Your Site

- Add a map: Use Google My Maps to create an interactive map of your neighborhood with markers for each address. Embed the map on your site.
- Create a timeline: Use a timeline tool to visualize the history of your neighborhood or specific properties.
- Include a contact form: Allow visitors to contact you with questions or information.

6. Share Your Site

- Publish your site: Make sure to adjust the sharing settings to the appropriate audience.
- Promote your site: Share the link with your community, local historical societies, and other researchers.

Using Google Sheets & Google My Maps

Examples of Column Headers

- Address: The full street address.
- Historic Name: The historic names for properties for the WWPN project comes from the Indiana Historical Sites and Structures Inventory (IHSSI) (AKA county survey) on the SHAARD database:
<https://secure.in.gov/apps/dnr/shaard/welcome.html>
- First Owner
- Builder/Architect: If known.
- Year Built: Construction year of the property.

- Cost to build: Typically discovered through newspaper building permit announcements
- Link to File: Link to the google Drive file for that property. Make sure to manage access settings to “anyone with link” “viewer.”
- IHSSI Rating: This is the rating given by the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory (county survey) which can be found on the SHAARD database.
- ISSHI Survey #
- Style: Architectural style of the building.
- Status: Current condition (e.g., "Standing", "Demolished").
- Notes: Any additional relevant information.
- Latitude & Longitude: Geographic coordinates for mapping. I like to have these two columns last.

Instructions for Google Sheets

1. Create a new spreadsheet: Open Google Sheets and create a new blank spreadsheet.
2. Set up headers: In the first row, create headers for each data point (Address, Latitude, Longitude, Year Built, Style, etc.).
3. Enter data: Manually input the information for each property in the corresponding rows and columns.
4. Geocode addresses (if needed): If you don't have latitude and longitude data, you can use the automatically generate them in Google Sheets:
 1. Create a New Google Sheet
 - Go to [Google Sheets](#) and create a new spreadsheet.
 - Enter your addresses in a single column for easier processing.
 2. Open Script Editor
 - Click on Extensions in the menu.
 - Select Apps Script.
 3. Copy and Paste the Geocoding Script
 - In the Apps Script editor, replace any code in there with the following script:

```

function geocodeAddresses() {
  var sheet = SpreadsheetApp.getActiveSpreadsheet().getActiveSheet();
  var data = sheet.getDataRange().getValues();
  var geocoder = Maps.newGeocoder();

  for (var i = 0; i < data.length; i++) {
    var address = data[i][0]; // Assuming addresses are in the first column
    var response = geocoder.geocode(address);

    if (response.status == 'OK') {
      var result = response.results[0];
      sheet.getRange(i + 1, 2).setValue(result.geometry.location.lat);
      sheet.getRange(i + 1, 3).setValue(result.geometry.location.lng);
    } else {
      sheet.getRange(i + 1, 2).setValue('Error');
      sheet.getRange(i + 1, 3).setValue('Error');
    }
  }
}

```

- This script reads addresses from the first column, geocodes them, and writes the latitude and longitude in the second and third columns, respectively.

4. Save and Run the Script

- Save the script with a suitable name.
- Run the script by clicking the play button in the toolbar.
- The first time you run the script, you will be prompted to authorize the script to access your Google account.

5. Check the Geocoded Data

- Return to your Google Sheet.
- You should see latitude and longitude values populated next to each address.

Instructions for Excel

1. Create a new workbook: Open Excel and create a new blank workbook.
2. Set up headers: In the first row, create headers identical to your Google Sheet.
3. Enter data: Manually input the property data.

4. Geocode addresses (if needed): **Excel doesn't have a built-in geocoding function. You'll need to use a third-party tool or website to get latitude and longitude coordinates and then paste them into your spreadsheet.**
5. Format data (optional): Format columns as needed, similar to Google Sheets.
6. Save and export: Save your Excel workbook. You can export it as a CSV file for Google My Maps.

Tips for Google My Maps

1. Import your data: In Google My Maps, create a new map and import your CSV file.
2. Map your data: Choose the "Address" column to place markers on the map.
3. Customize markers: Use different colors or icons to represent different property statuses or styles.
4. Add information to markers: You can include details from other columns (e.g., Year Built, Style) in the marker's information window.

Additional Tips

- Consistency: Maintain consistent data entry (e.g., abbreviations, capitalization) for easier sorting and filtering.
 - Sources: Keep track of your information sources for accuracy and future reference.
 - Collaboration: If working with others, consider sharing your spreadsheet in Google Sheets or Excel for collaborative editing.
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Researching Historic Homes

Check out: "If these walls could talk: How to Research Your Home":

<https://youtu.be/3eqZaKWOIC8?si=RgNA m3djwITAk-Ea>

Documents to Look for to Get Started:

- Census
 - Use Steve Morse's website to determine the Enumeration District:
<https://stevemorse.org/>
- City Directories & Phone Books
- Newspapers

- Real estate transfers
- Building permits
- Information about residents
- Deeds
 - 1824-1901 (and the 1902 index) for Allen County can be accessed in the library on FamilySearch:
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1010466?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
 - Post-1901 deeds can only be accessed at the Allen County Recorder's Office:
<https://www.allencountyrecorder.us/searching-and-printing-documents>
- Maps
 - Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
 - Plat maps
 - Fort Wayne neighborhood plats can be found by searching by the name of the addition here:
<https://inallen.fidlar.com/INAllen/CovenantSearch/#/search>
- Wills & Probate Records
 - 1825-1921 Allen County Wills & Probate Records can be accessed in the library on FamilySearch:
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/836643?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

Basic Tips:

- Take note of all the relevant numbers:
 - Lot number
 - House number (both current and any previous)
- If you aren't finding much in the newspapers:
 - Look at the real estate transfers section of the newspaper in that era and make a note of the exact verbiage used in that section. This will help you determine exactly what search terms you should be using to get better results.
- Deeds:
 - Try to collect as many deeds for the property as you can– this will establish a firm chain of title for you to work with.

- You will need names to work with, so utilize the census, city directories, and the newspaper together to determine who the potential owners are.
 - *Don't forget that not everyone who lived in your house necessarily owned the property.*
- **What to do if you have the name of an owner (specifically a "grantee") to look for, but you are still unable to find an entry in your county's deed index:**
 - Try looking for the real estate transfer announcement in the newspaper.
 - This will at least help narrow down when the deed was recorded (which didn't always happen immediately) and it will give you a name of a grantor to look for.
 - Be patient! Not every deed index (assuming there is an accessible index) is easy to work with. It might take browsing an entire volume of the index a few times to find what you're looking for.
- **Research the Residents, Owners, and the Community!**
 - Regardless of how ordinary, people are at the heart of every building, so it is important (and often helpful) to dig into the stories of the people attached to the house.
 - Important questions to ask:
 - What was happening in the world, the state, and the local community that a family might experience while living in the house?
 - Where did residents work? How does that inform us on their economic status?
 - What kind of joy or sadness could a family have experienced while living there?
 - Look for vital records for family members, but don't forget to look at the local newspapers' society pages. You never know what you'll find in the newspaper!
 - Looking at the neighborhood or community:
 - Where did people shop, worship, work, send their children to school, or have fun?
 - If your house is in a neighborhood or a subdivision, take a look into the history of the formation of the neighborhood. Was the land a part of someone else's larger estate?

- If your house is in a rural community, research the settlement of the area!
- **Don't forget to talk to the house's current neighbors or others in your community!**
 - You never know what legends might be attached to your home.

Online Resources for Researching the Style of the House:

- *Radford American Homes– 100 House Plans* (1903):
 - <https://archive.org/details/radfordamericanh00radfrich>
- House Catalogs/Books of House Plans on Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>)
 - Search results for 1885-1926: <https://bit.ly/3xZFYN3>
- Bandon, Alexandra. "American House Styles." *This Old House*, January 3, 2021. <https://www.thisoldhouse.com/21018307/american-house-styles>.
- Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey (Library of Congress):
 - This collection contains over 581,000 measured drawings, large-format photographs, and written histories for more than 43,000 historic structures (houses, windmills, one-room schools, etc.) and sites dating from Pre-Columbian times to the 20th century.
 - <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/>
- Google Lens
 - <https://lens.google/>
 - This is a great tool for reverse image searching things that you don't recognize
- Old House Facebook Groups!

Other Recorded Programs to Check Out:

- Using Tax Records in Genealogical Research: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-0_IWplg-w&list=PL8AE558B5D8661B31&index=4
- "A Nation Talking to Itself": Intro to Newspaper Research: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTZTYOqkBII&list=PL8AE558B5D8661B31&index=21>

Useful and Interesting Online Resources:

- Atlas of Historical County Boundaries:
 - <http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>

- State Historic Preservation Offices (this links to all of them):
 - <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/state-historic-preservation-offices.htm>
- Library of Congress Farm Security Administration Photo Collection [filter by location]:
 - <https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=farm+security+administration>

How to Find County Tax Lists, Land/Deed, and Wills/ Probate Records on FamilySearch:

- Starting on the homepage, click search
- Click catalog
- Search by place and type the county in the search box
- Availability
 - I liked to filter this to "online" to exclude items physically located elsewhere
- On the search results page, you should see a list of record categories. Click "Land and Property" (or whatever subject category you need).
- Look at the titles of each set of digitized microfilm and select the one that makes sense based on the time frame you are researching
- On the record page, scroll down, find the reel you need, and click on the camera on the right-hand side.
 - Note: If there is a key symbol above the camera, that means you will have to access this from inside a family history library or an affiliate library (the Genealogy Center is a FamilySearch affiliate).

Research Technique Articles in PERSI (<https://www.genealogycenter.info/persi/>)

- Land Records: https://www.genealogycenter.info/results_persihowto.php
- Deeds: https://www.genealogycenter.info/results_persihowto.php
- Maps: https://www.genealogycenter.info/results_persihowto.php
- Tax Records: https://www.genealogycenter.info/results_persihowto.php

Allen County Community Album: <http://contentdm.acpl.lib.in.us/>

Books on Federal Land Records

McMullin, Phillip W, ed. *Grassroots of America: A Computerized Index to the American State Papers, Land Grants and Claims: 1789-1837*. Salt Lake City: Gendex Corp., 1994. ACPL Call #: 973.4 UN3AA

Smith, Clifford Neal. *Federal Land Series: A Calendar of Archival Materials on the Land Patents Issued by the United States Government, with Subject, Tract, and Name Indexes*. Baltimore, MD: Reprinted for Clearfield Co. by Genealogical Pub. Co., 1999. [ACPL Call #: 973.004 SM5FB](#)

Yoshpe, Harry B., and Philip P. Brower. *Preliminary Inventory of the Land-Entry Papers of the General Land Office*. Washington, 1949.
[ACPL Call #: 973 UN32Y](#)

Additional Books Suggestions:

Beyond Vital Records. Logan, UT: Everton Publishers, 1983. [ACPL Call #: 929 B468](#)

Blanchard, Gill. *Tracing Your House History: A Guide for Family Historians*. Pen & Sword Family History, 2017. [ACPL Call #: Available digitally on Hoopla](#)

Clifford, Karen. *Digging Deeper: Using Essential Pre-1850 Records: An Intermediate Genealogy Guidebook*. South Jordan, UT: Genealogy Research Associates, 2011. [ACPL Call #: 929 C612DI](#)

Davenport, Linda Haas. *Taking the Mystery out of Land Records: Using Land Records in Genealogical Research*. Broken Arrow, OK: L.H. Davenport, 2008. [ACPL Call #: 929 D273TA](#)

Eichholz, Alice, ed. *Red Book: American State, County & Town Sources*. Provo, UT: Ancestry, 2004. [ACPL Call #: 929 AN17A](#)

Elliott, Wendy L. *Using Land Records to Solve Research Problems*. Bountiful, UT: American Genealogical Society, 1987. [ACPL Call #: 929 EL5U](#)

Green, Betsy J. *Discovering the History of Your House and Your Neighborhood*. Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2002. [ACPL Call #: 929 G82DI](#)

Hatcher, Patricia Law. *Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Pub. Co, 2016.
[ACPL Call #: 929 H282LO](#)

Hone, E. Wade. *Land & Property Research in the United States*. Provo, UT: Ancestry Pub., 2008. ACPL Call #: 973 H7552

Larkin, Jack. *Where We Lived: Discovering the Places We Once Called Home: The American Home from 1775 to 1840*. Taunton Press, 2006.
ACPL Call# 973 L32W

Lathrop, Elise. *Historic Houses of Early America*. New York, R.M. McBride & Company, 1927. ACPL Call #: 973 L34H

Massey, James C. *House Styles in America: The Old-House Journal Guide to the Architecture of American Homes*. New York, NY: Penguin Studio, 1999.
ACPL Call #: 728.37 M38H

Waterfield, Marjorie. *Petition to Partition Land Records: A Valuable Document for Genealogists*. Bowling Green, OH: M. Waterfield, 1988.
ACPL Call #: 929 W29P

The Genealogy Center
Genealogy@ACPL.Info
900 Library Plaza
Fort Wayne, IN 46802