



Environmental Assessment of Properties

Material to aid your assessment research can be found at the Fort Collins Museum Local History Archive, the Fort Collins Library District 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

The object of an environmental assessment is to determine the various uses of the land. There are few maps that document the use of the land; therefore one must do indirect research by finding out who lived on the property and how they used the property.

STEP 1: LOOK AT MAPS.

The Archive has only two types of "land use maps":

1. Sanborn Insurance Maps which date only from 1886-1940. Check to see if your property is within the boundaries of these maps — Fort Collins' boundaries in 1940 were the Poudre River on the north, Riverside Ave. on the east, Laurel St. on the south, and Shields St. on the West. The 1940 map also includes 2 new additions — the one north and west of City Park and the addition south of Laurel to Prospect St. along College Ave. Any properties outside this area will not be on the Sanborn maps! These maps are also available on microfilm and online through the Library
2. Maps that detail property ownership of all the Larimer County farm land in 1914, 1915, 1940, 1956, 1959, 1968, and 1975; and Fort Collins residential property ownership maps from 1894 and 1929 are in the Local History Archive. These may assist you in finding the owner of your property. The Archive does have aerial photographs but few aerial maps. The USGS maps of the Fort Collins Area are available by asking the Reference Desk for assistance.

STEP 2: LOOK AT CITY DIRECTORIES AND FARM/RURAL DIRECTORIES TO DETERMINE THE RESIDENTS/OWNERS OF YOUR PROPERTY. The city directories from 1902-2006 are available the Archive. The Library has microfilms of city directories from 1902-1976. A 1902, 1904, and 1906 City Directory database is online. There is not a city directory available for every year. For those directories that are not online, you can trace the property's residents and use by using the "Numerical Street and Avenue" section which lists the properties by street location. Not every city directory has this section, so then you will need to use the section which lists the occupants of residences/businesses by name. You can trace back through the last person/business you have listed on the property. If your property was not on a street, then it may be listed in the Rural Route section of the City Directory. However, you will need a name of a resident of the property to trace in the rural section of the Directory. The rural section does not include addresses, only the Rural Route number. However, the 1939, 1947, and 1959 Farm and Rural Directories include personal and real property values, legal description of property, rural route number, wife's name, and occupation. Make a list of property uses and residents/owners by year.

STEP 3: LOOK UP INFORMATION ON YOUR ADDRESSES IN THE HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE DATABASE. This online database provides photographs and information on properties and their owners. Building Records and Permits are in the Records Search. Internet access is available at computer work stations in the Local History Archive, Harmony and Main libraries or from any computer with internet connection.

STEP 4: LOOK UP INFORMATION ON YOUR LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES IN THE LARIMER COUNTY HISTORY BOOKS. There are four local history books which can provide significant information: Fort Collins Yesterdays (978.868 Non-Fiction) and its index which is a separate book filed with the history; History of Larimer County 1911 (978.8 Non-Fiction, Oversize, and Reference) and its index which is a separate book filed with the history; History of Larimer County Volumes I: 1985 and II: 1860s-1987. Please note that there are 2 indexes in these two volumes: Surname and General).

ADDITIONAL ARCHIVE RESOURCES

Tax Assessor Records: There is a partial collection of the Larimer County tax records which date from 1948-1970s. These records provide building construction dates, floor plans, and a photograph. You need to know the township, range, quarter section, and a parcel number of your property in order to access these records. Some of these records are available online. Click on Photo Search Option. Enter your street address in Keyword and select Tax Assessor Records from All Collections. Additionally there is an online exhibit of rural tax assessor records at Larimer County Farms and Ranches.

Historic Photograph Collection: There may be photographs of the owners/residents of your property and its buildings. Order Forms for photographs are online.

Biographical and Subject Files: This is an index of files in the archive that contain newspaper clippings, manuscripts, reports, etc. about various properties and individuals. Much of the information in these files has already been summarized in the local history books.

Newspaper Index: Local History volunteers are currently indexing the early Fort Collins' newspapers and have completed the index for 1874 and 1878-1909 and 1975-1979. This index may lead you to additional newspaper information on the owners or uses of your property. Some of these indexes are now online. Microfilmed Fort Collins' newspapers of 1874 and 1878-present and the Coloradoan newspaper index from 1977-1987 are in the Local History Archive. The Colorado Newspaper Digitization Project has digitized Larimer County newspapers from 1878 to 1923. The images are every word searchable and are online at: <http://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org> .

Building Permits and Records: In the archive there is a Fort Collins Building Permit Record Book from January 1920-December 1949. The archive also has a vertical file of miscellaneous building records from 1878-1956 that have been copied from the newspaper. All of these records are available in our online database.

Historic Building Surveys and Contexts: There are many surveys of historic buildings available in the Local History Archive. Some are available on the Non-Fiction Shelf for check-out, and are cataloged by neighborhood or street. These surveys provide you with construction date, photograph, architectural description, historical significance, and determination of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Some of this information has been entered in the Buildings Database. There is also a list of buildings that are Local Landmarks, or listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

Oral History Transcripts: There are approximately 300 verbatim transcripts of interviews with Larimer County residents which can be checked out. These are cataloged on the library's catalog by individual and subject. Ask the Reference Librarian to retrieve the interview for you. There are also many interviews which have not been cataloged, but are available for research by the interviewee's name. We may have an interview of your property owner! Excerpts from some interviews on Local Events and World War II are online.

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 owner 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 which pertain to the property may be available in the District Court office, second floor of the Courthouse, 201 Laporte.