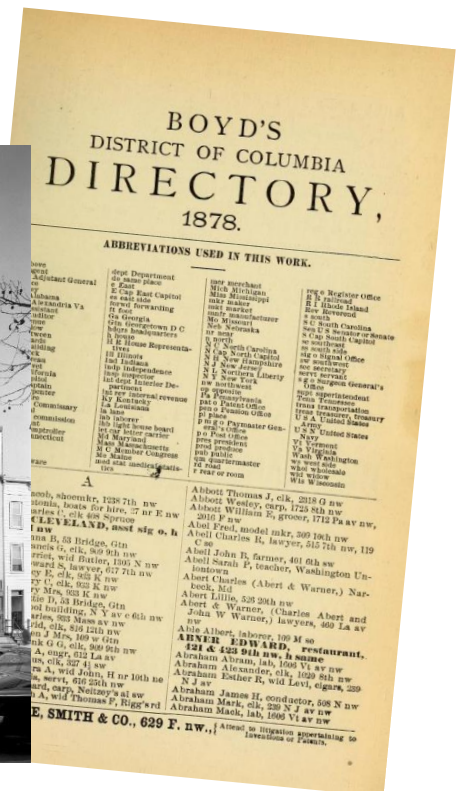
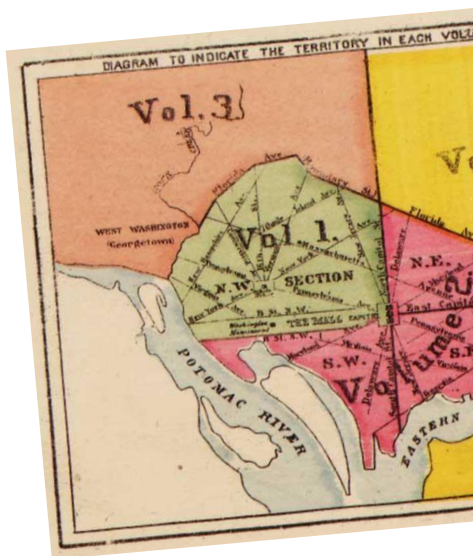


# DC HISTORY CENTER



## BUILDING HISTORY RESOURCES

Available at the Kiplinger Research Library

Research queries & appointment requests\*: [library@dchistory.org](mailto:library@dchistory.org)

Visit our online catalog at [dchistory.pastperfectonline.com/](http://dchistory.pastperfectonline.com/)

Learn More [dchistory.org/research](http://dchistory.org/research)

\*Due to concerns about the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Kiplinger Research Library is currently closed (last updated January 2021). In-person research appointments are not being offered at this time. Once conditions allow, we will announce the resumption of in-person appointments on our website ([dchistory.org/library](http://dchistory.org/library)) and via our email newsletter and social media. [Subscribe to our email list to receive updates.](#)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPOINTMENTS AT THE KIPLINGER RESEARCH LIBRARY .....	3
BUILDING PERMITS .....	3
HISTORYQUEST – <a href="#">ONLINE RESOURCE</a> .....	3
ACCESS DATABASE.....	3
REPAIR, RENOVATION, RAZE, MODIFICATION, ETC. PERMITS.....	3
BUILDING PERMITS AFTER 1949 .....	3
MAPS & REAL ESTATE ATLASES.....	4
ONLINE ACCESS – <a href="#">ONLINE RESOURCE</a> .....	4
DIRECTORIES.....	5
CITY DIRECTORIES (1822 – 1973).....	5
PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT DIRECTORIES .....	5
DIRECTORIES AVAILABLE AT THE WASHINGTONIANA DIVISION OF THE DC PUBLIC LIBRARY .....	5
ONLINE ACCESS – <a href="#">ONLINE RESOURCE</a> .....	5
PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE DC HISTORY CENTER’S COLLECTION .....	6
JOHN P. WYMER PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION – <a href="#">ONLINE RESOURCE</a> .....	6
EMIL A. PRESS SLIDE COLLECTION.....	6
WM. EDMUND BARRETT WASHINGTON PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION .....	6
OTHER RESOURCES TO EXPLORE .....	7
CONDUCT HISTORIC ARCHITECT OR BUILDER RESEARCH.....	7
RESEARCH COOPERATIVE BUILDINGS AND CONDOMINIUMS.....	7
NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY – <a href="#">ONLINE RESOURCE</a> .....	8
OTHER REPOSITORIES TO EXPLORE .....	9
THE PEOPLE’S ARCHIVE, DC PUBLIC LIBRARY.....	9
DC ARCHIVES.....	9
NATIONAL ARCHIVES.....	9
D.C. GOVERNMENT – <a href="#">ONLINE RESOURCE</a> .....	9
APPENDIX 1 – STREET NUMBERING SYSTEM IN WASHINGTON, D.C.....	10
APPENDIX 2 – HOUSE HISTORY DATA WORKSHEET .....	12

## Appointments at the Kiplinger Research Library

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## Building Permits

### HistoryQuest - ONLINE RESOURCE

HistoryQuest ([bit.ly/2IZG5pC](http://bit.ly/2IZG5pC)) is the online component of the building permits database for extant buildings only. This GIS map provides historical data on approximately 127,000 buildings in Washington, DC. The map offers several operational layers of information for the user including historic data on individual buildings, links to documentation on properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, information on historic residential subdivisions, and the identification and boundaries of the L'Enfant Plan, and the city's Squares, and Wards. The featured layer in the map—the Historical Data on DC Buildings—provides information from a variety of sources on original dates of construction, architects, owners and builders of the city's historic buildings.

### Access Database

If the property you wish to research was constructed between 1877 and 1949, it should have a recorded building permit (initial permit to build). Architect, builder, year the permit was filed, amount paid, ownership, etc. can all be gleaned from this document. You'll need to provide the address to a librarian on duty to receive a printout of this data. This database includes buildings that have been razed.

### Repair, Renovation, Raze, Modification, etc. Permits

Available via microfilm at **Washingtoniana Division in the People's Archive of the DC Public Library** ([dclibrary.org/wash](http://dclibrary.org/wash)) and **National Archives** (Series - District of Columbia Building Permits, 1877–1949, identifier: M1116 – See guide for access in Appendix 2).

### Building Permits after 1949

#### *Available through DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA)*

DCRA holds the index and database necessary to request the material from the DC Archives for building permits from 1949 – 1995. To access these, contact DCRA with street address and / or square and lot. DCRA will search the index, then contact DC Archives on the patron's behalf. DC Archives staff will contact the patron with the results of the search (i.e. to indicate that the material was or was not located and how to schedule an appointment to review it if it was).

## Maps & Real Estate Atlases

Real Estate Atlases are structure-level maps which identify street address, square and lot numbers, and subdivision name (if applicable). Depending on the location of the property, any or all of these elements may have varied over time.

Reviewing real estate atlases chronologically can help determine the approximate date of building construction and trace neighborhood development.

Holdings at the DC History Center include Boschke maps (1857, 1861), Faetz and Pratt atlas (1873-1874), Hopkins atlas (1878), Hopkins Real Estate atlas (1887-1896), Baist Real Estate Atlases (1903-1968), and Sanborn Insurance maps.

### Online Access - ONLINE RESOURCE

The DC Public Library has digitized plat maps/real estate atlases from 1874 to 1896; see the *Maps: Real Estate Plat Books* collection at Dig DC ([digdc.dclibrary.org](http://digdc.dclibrary.org)). In addition, the *Maps: City & Regional* collection on Dig DC may show early maps of your neighborhood. The Library of Congress online map collection also includes early Baist and Sanborn atlases:

#### Baist Atlases

1903 (Vol 1, Vol 2, Vol 3) [bit.ly/Baist1903](http://bit.ly/Baist1903)

1907 (Vol 3, Vol 4) [bit.ly/Baist1907](http://bit.ly/Baist1907)

1909 (Vol 1, Vol 2) [bit.ly/Baist1909-1911](http://bit.ly/Baist1909-1911)

1911 (Vol 3) [bit.ly/Baist1909-1911](http://bit.ly/Baist1909-1911)

1913 (Vol 1, Vol 4) [bit.ly/Baist1913](http://bit.ly/Baist1913)

1915 (Vol 2) [bit.ly/Baist1913-1915](http://bit.ly/Baist1913-1915)

1915 (Vol 3) [bit.ly/Baist1913-1915](http://bit.ly/Baist1913-1915)

1919 (Vol 1, Vol 3) [bit.ly/Baist1919-1921](http://bit.ly/Baist1919-1921)

1921 (Vol 2, Vol 4) [bit.ly/Baist1919-1921](http://bit.ly/Baist1919-1921)

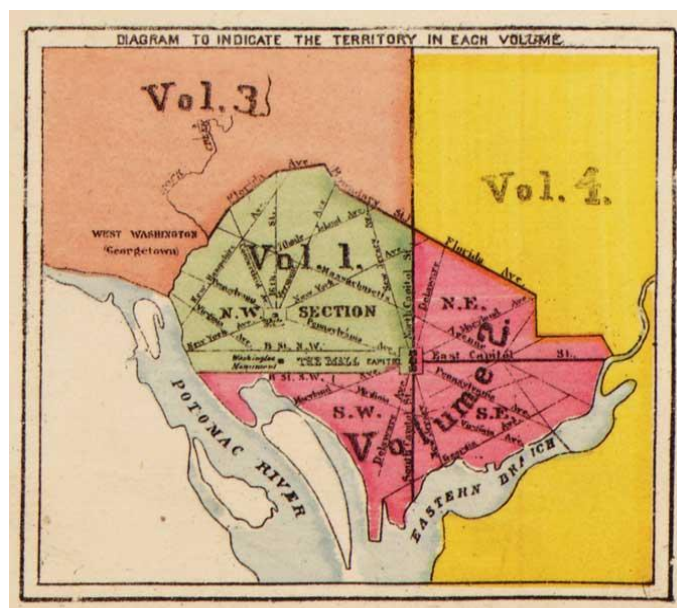
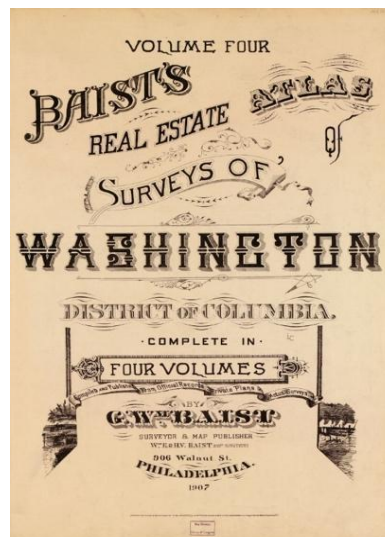
#### Sanborn Atlases

1888 (Washington City & Georgetown) [bit.ly/Sanborn1888](http://bit.ly/Sanborn1888)

1903 (Vol 1) [bit.ly/Sanborn1903](http://bit.ly/Sanborn1903)

1904 (Vol 2) [bit.ly/Sanborn1904](http://bit.ly/Sanborn1904)

1916 (Vol 3) [bit.ly/Sanborn1916](http://bit.ly/Sanborn1916)



## Directories

### City Directories (1822 – 1973)

The DC History Center Reading Room holds Boyd’s City Directories for 1822, 1827, 1834, 1843, 1846, 1850, 1853, 1855, 1858, 1860–1943, 1948, 1954, 1956, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1970, and 1973. Directories list residents alphabetically, and include occupation, place of employment, home address, race (up to 1870), and names of spouses (1928 onwards).

From 1914–1973, directories include a separate street address index. Patrons may search for their homes by address to discover its historic occupant. Volumes also contained a business directory, organized by business category.

Data was collected via door-to-door canvas in December of the previous year. If your home was built and occupied within a calendar year, the residents may not appear in the directory at that address until the following year.

### Property Tax Assessment Directories

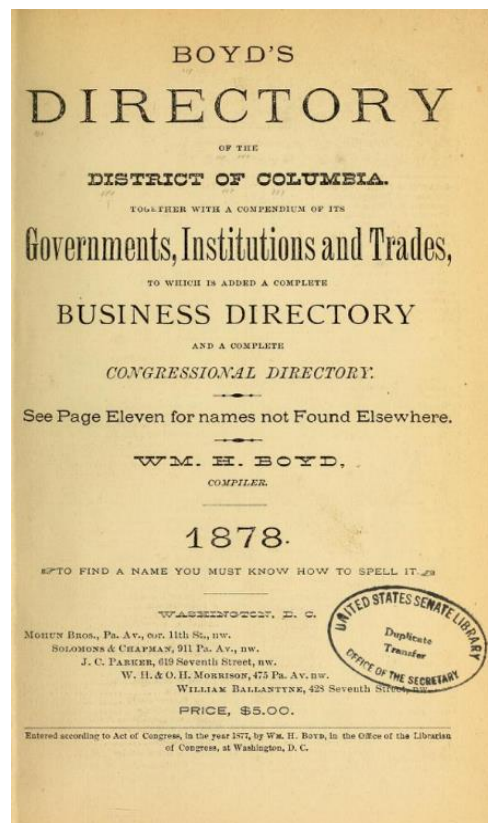
The DC History Center holds select 20<sup>th</sup> century tax assessment directories, primarily 1917–1940 and 1981–1999 available by appointment. An inventory can be provided in advance.

### Directories Available at the Washingtoniana Division of the DC Public Library

These directories are available from 1874 – 2009 on microfilm. Information provided here will include property owner, assessed value of lot and “improvement” (the value of the house), and square footage. Property’s square and lot number will be needed to search.

### Online Access – ONLINE RESOURCE

Online database HeritageQuest ([bit.ly/2krNU73](http://bit.ly/2krNU73); available with DCPL card) has some city directories. However, this database is setup for searching for individual people rather than browsing the entire digitized directory. Select directories between 1860–1909 have been digitized and are available online, an index is available at: <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=boyddc>.



## Photographs in the DC History Center's Collection

### John P. Wymer Photograph Collection – ONLINE RESOURCE

In 1948–52, hobbyist photographer John Wymer divided the city into sections and photographed representative residential blocks. He also photographed any other buildings of interest in the area, such as churches, schools, parks, commercial centers, etc. This collection is a comprehensive glimpse into D.C. in the mid-twentieth century. Link to database record: [SP 0052 – John P. Wymer Photograph Collection](#). Wymer's DC (<http://www.wymersdc.com/>) is an interactive map that places select images from this collection onto google street view.

### Emil A. Press Slide Collection

This is a collection of about 4,000 color images taken between 1959–1979. The images are mainly of Washington, D.C. south of Florida Avenue, but some outlying areas are included. Emil Press often photographed buildings that were slated for, or in the process of demolition. Link to database record: [SP 0034 – Emil A. Press Slide Collection](#).

### Wm. Edmund Barrett Washington Photographic Collection

As part of the Kiplinger Washington Collection, the DC History Center received the Wm. Edmund Barrett Photographic Collection. This collection of nearly 4,000 photographs documents D.C. buildings in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly endangered buildings or those which were slated to be razed. Link to database record: [MS 0128 – W. Edmund Barrett Washington Photograph Collection](#).



## Other Resources to Explore

### Research Families in the Census - ONLINE RESOURCE

Searching for the individuals associated with a property (e.g. owners and occupants) in the Census can yield a great deal of detail about the family such as other family members, race, place of birth and occupation. Start with the Heritage Quest database ([bit.ly/2krNU73](http://bit.ly/2krNU73); available with DCPL card), through which the following census years may be searched by name: 1790-1820; 1860-1880; 1900-1940. All census years between 1790 and 1940 may be browsed (except the 1890 census that burned). There is no way to search a specific address in the census but searching by general location is possible for the following years: 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, using enumeration district maps.

### Conduct Newspaper Research - ONLINE RESOURCE

Additional information about a property and the people associated with it can be found by doing newspaper research. A great place to start is the DC Public Library's collection of full-text local newspapers ([bit.ly/2HtJVPT](http://bit.ly/2HtJVPT)), including *The Washington Post* (1877 to present) and *The Evening Star* (1852-1981). TIP: Search names and addresses in quotation marks to narrow results. You will need a library card number to access these databases.

The Library of Congress has many other digitized local newspapers searchable online through their Chronicling America - Historic American Newspapers project: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

### Conduct Historic Architect or Builder Research

The DC History Center holds in its collections the James M. Goode Architects in Washington, D.C., collection, 1870-1987 (link to database record: [MS 0384](#)). The collection contains materials on almost 200 noted architects and architectural firms compiled by Goode in 1987 as part of his research on Washington's cultural, social, and architectural landscape. Included are news clippings, notes, brochures, photographs, and copies of plans. To access this collection, please speak to the DC History Center library staff to view a finding aid.

The Building Permits Database was compiled from the reels of microfilmed permits located at the National Archives and Records Administration and Washingtoniana, part of The People's Archive at the DC Public Library. The earliest archived permit dates from February 17, 1877, although permits were issued by the City beginning in early 1872. All permits issued through September 1949 were microfilmed. This database also includes information on original owner, architect, and builder of these properties. From this database, a librarian can create a report which details other properties that may have been designed, built, or owned by someone who was connected to your property. With this method, researchers can learn about other "sister" properties across the District that share a common architect, etc. with their own property.

### Research Cooperative Buildings and Condominiums

The DC History Center holds in its collections the Edmund J. Flynn Company records (link to database record: [MS 0625](#)). Edmund Flynn helped introduce cooperative apartments to Washington, D.C. In 1921, Flynn was the sales representative for Wardman Construction Company and by 1926, had created the Edmund J. Flynn Company, specializing in cooperatives.

The records consist of promotional and business documents relating to the properties managed by the Edmund J. Flynn Company. The records chronicle both architectural history and residential life in such prominent addresses as the Ontario, the Westchester, the Broadmoor, Harbor Square, Potomac Plaza, the Presidential, Hampshire Gardens, and more.

### **Neighborhood History - ONLINE RESOURCE**

To conduct neighborhood histories, there are many, many different types of materials and sources to consider. Each neighborhood will be unique in the information available; however, there are some sources that provide basic overviews:

#### ***Cultural Tourism Heritage Trail Brochures***

Cultural Tourism DC's Neighborhood Heritage Trails are the official walking trails of Washington, D.C. and they cover the diverse social history of over 20 neighborhoods. The brochures are available to download as a pdf, as a mobile app, or as an audio recording. Search the trail brochures here: [culturaltourismdc.org/portal/dc-neighborhood-heritage-trails](http://culturaltourismdc.org/portal/dc-neighborhood-heritage-trails).

#### ***Office of Historic Preservation Ward Heritage Guides***

The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) has been working with local communities to prepare a series of heritage guides for the District's eight wards. Each illustrated guide describes the ward's historical development, shows recognized historic properties, and identifies other sites that may be significant to local culture or valued by neighborhood residents. Potential strategies for increasing appreciation and protection of community heritage are also discussed. Wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 are available here: [planning.dc.gov/node/1184536](http://planning.dc.gov/node/1184536).

#### ***DC History Center Neighborhood Vertical Files***

Vertical files are collections of newspaper clippings plus other ephemera arranged by subject. The DC History Center has vertical files for D.C. neighborhoods. Speak to the librarians to access an index to these vertical files. These vertical files can be requested from the librarians.

#### ***Photographic Collections***

The DC History Center has over 100,000 cataloged historic photographs, most of which are of D.C. neighborhoods. These images may be useful for your research to help visualize what the neighborhood was like during different periods of time. Some of these photograph collections are neighborhood-specific, like the Kathleen Sinclair Wood photograph collection, which is several thousand images of primarily Cleveland Park, and the Susan Myers Capitol Hill Residences Collection, which is thousands of photographs of Capitol Hill in the 1970s and 1980s.

Other collections, such as those like Wymer, Press, and Barrett that were outlined above cover many neighborhoods and may be of broader use. Search the online catalog (<https://dchistory.pastperfectonline.com/>) using the hundred block for the address that you are interested in. For example, to find pictures of 906 G Street NW, search 900 AND G.

#### ***And More. . .***

The DC History Center may have additional archival material such as books, pamphlets, and ephemera on the specific neighborhood of interest. The DC History Center also has neighborhood and civic association records for areas such as Woodland Normanstone, Kenilworth, Foggy Bottom,



Woodley Park, and more. Speak to a librarian or search the online catalog to learn more about these resources.

## Other Repositories to Explore

### The People's Archive, DC Public Library

**Washingtoniana**, housed at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library, holds an extensive collection of historical materials and resources related to D.C. history; Visit [dclibrary.org/washingtoniana](http://dclibrary.org/washingtoniana) to learn more. Specific resources relevant to House Histories include tax assessments records, building permits, neighborhood files, and more. The **Peabody Collection** at the Georgetown branch of the DC Public Library holds a plethora of resources specific to Georgetown, such vertical files (arranged by street address), photographs, tax assessment records (19<sup>th</sup> century), neighborhood newspapers (on microfilm, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century), and more. Please contact Jerry McCoy, librarian, at Peabody Room (202-727-0233 or [jerry.mccoy@dc.gov](mailto:jerry.mccoy@dc.gov)).

### DC Archives

The District of Columbia Archives holds historical and permanently valuable records of the DC Government such as birth and death records, wills, land records and marriage records. Please email [archives@dc.gov](mailto:archives@dc.gov) to make an appointment.

Specific resources relevant to House Histories include: deed and land records (1879-1973); building permits (1949-1995); building plans (1949-1995); and deeds issued prior 1900.

### National Archives

The National Archives building (on Pennsylvania Ave NW between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>) holds many resources related to local D.C. history. These range from building permits to the Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital. See this relevant *InTowner* article which outlines local archival holdings for the District of Columbia: <http://bit.ly/2C4fsCm>.

Specific resources relevant to House Histories include: Building Permits (1877 – 1949) and DC City Directories (1867-1970).

### D.C. Government – ONLINE RESOURCE

#### *Recorder of Deeds Online (1921 – Present)*

For public deed and land record information (liens, bonds, easements, etc.) from 1921 – present, there is an online portal available here:

<https://countyfusion4.kofiletech.us/countyweb/login.do?countyname=WashingtonDC>

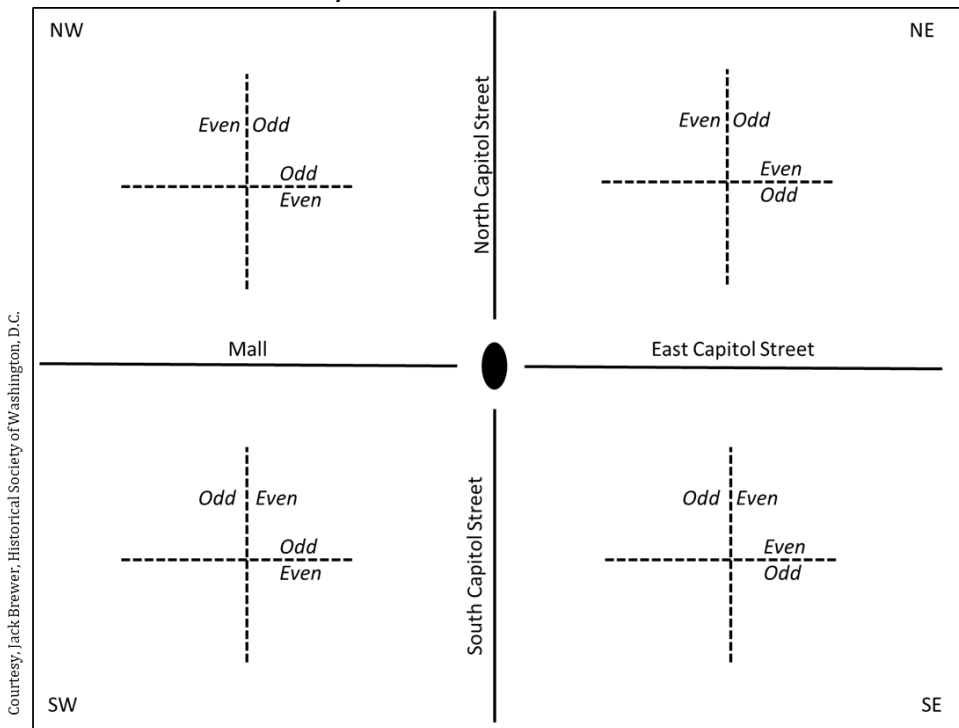
For public deed and land record information that falls outside of this time period, visit the Department of Tax and Revenue's Office of Recorder of Deeds (202- 727-5374)

#### *Office of Historic Preservation*

Visit this page to access their lists of historic sites, historic districts, and information on how to apply for a listing in the historic site inventory: <https://planning.dc.gov/page/historic-landmarks-and-historic-districts>

## Appendix 1 – Street Numbering System in Washington, D.C.

Use this chart to identify which side of the street even and odd addresses will be on by quadrant.



*As you walk away from any Capitol Street, even numbers will be on your left and odd numbers will be on your right.*

Use this chart to identify the nearest alphabetic cross-street for the hundred block of a numbered street.

- For example, the 1100 block of 8<sup>th</sup> street starts at 8<sup>th</sup> and L Street.
- Note that J is omitted from the list of alphabetical streets and that this rule may not apply to streets which are non-continuous such as 8<sup>th</sup> etc.

Hundred Block	<b>100</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>1300</b>
Alphabetic Cross Street	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	M	N
Hundred Block	<b>1400</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>1700</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2100</b>	<b>2200</b>	<b>2300</b>	<b>2400</b>	<b>2500</b>	
Alphabetic Cross Street	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	

## Locating pre-Civil War D.C. Addresses

Modern street addresses do not correspond to the street numberings of buildings in pre-Civil War Washington. The present system of numbering the buildings in Washington City (quadrant system) was developed and implemented in 1869.

**Until 1854:** No street numbering. For example, the store of Charles Sioussa, plasterer, is listed in the 1846 city directory as on the west side of 18<sup>th</sup> Street, west, between H and I Street, north (i.e., west and north of the Capitol Building)

**1854-1869:** As described in the 1867 city directory, address numbers start at the western or northern boundaries of the “City of Washington.”

Numbers on the lettered streets start at the west on Boundary Street (Florida Avenue), Rock Creek, or the Potomac River, increasing to the east.

Numbers on numbered streets start at the north on Boundary Street, increasing to the south.

Numbers on the diagonal avenues start at Boundary Street, increasing to the southwest or southeast.

e.g. In 1867, the address of the store of Charles Sioussa, plasterer – on the same site as listed above – was 361 18<sup>th</sup> Street, west (i.e., west of the Capitol)

**1854-1884:** As described in the finding aid included in the 1867 city directory, Georgetown addresses start at Rock Creek, increasing to the west; and at the Potomac River, increasing to the north.

**1884:** First city directory in which Georgetown numbering system matches that of the rest of the District of Columbia.

**1869-present:** New system devised by E. Dwight Clapp and adopted by the city aldermen and Common Council on November 29, 1869. Building addresses are based on the progression of the numbered streets and of the lettered streets, and on the quadrants centered at the Capitol, originated by Pierre L’Enfant.

For example, using the city grid laid out by L’Enfant, Clapp designated the addresses between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, or C and D Streets in the 300 category; and those between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, or D and E Streets, in the 400 category.

Addresses on an Avenue are handled the same way, based on its inclination relative to the horizontal. Maryland Avenue, for example, is at a low inclination; its addresses are as if it were a lettered street. New Hampshire Avenue, with a steep inclination, has addresses like a numbered street.

Odd address numbers are on the right as one faces in the direction away from the street’s origin. Numbered streets originate at the Mall or East Capitol Street; lettered streets originate at North or South Capitol Street.

*Adapted, Original source: “Washington City, Its Founding and Development” by Frederick L. Fishback in Records of the Columbia Historical Society. Vol. 20 (1917).*

## Appendix 2 – House History Data Worksheet

Use these blank forms to keep track of the data you uncover in the Kiplinger Research Library!

### Building Permit Data Worksheet

Address	
Year Built	
Square	
Lot	
Architect	
Builder	

### City Directory Research Notes Worksheet

Year	Address	Occupants' Name, Occupation, etc.

### Real Estate Atlas Research Worksheet

Property Address:

Volume	Year	Plate / Page	Notes