So, you’re wondering just how to get started finding out about your home’s history? This information sheet will provide you with places in which to find documentation to complete a house history.

If you visit a place listed below, be sure to bring paper and pencils (many archives don’t allow pens). Cameras and flash drives can also be helpful. Happy researching!

1. Cuyahoga County MyPlace - [https://myplace.cuyahogacounty.us/](https://myplace.cuyahogacounty.us/)
   This is a good place to start your research. You’re not going to discover a ton of historic information here, but you can find the permanent parcel number (PPN)—make note of this number, you’ll need it throughout your research. You may also find the year it was built (for older homes, many years were rounded to the nearest 5, though), lot information, some building information, recent owner history, and aerial photos going back to the 1990s. This is a good place to start compiling a list of keywords, including the address, parcel number, previous owners, etc. that you can use in your searches.

   For more detailed information, including the aerial images, click “go to full map” on the bottom right.

2. Cleveland Heights City Hall, Department of Planning - [https://www.clevelandheights.gov/237/History-Architecture](https://www.clevelandheights.gov/237/History-Architecture)
   Once you have the data from MyPlace in your pocket, reach out to City Hall to see what information they might have by emailing bkirk@clevelandheights.gov. Original Building Permits are available for many homes built after 1913. These dated permits give the name(s) of the original owner(s), builder, and architect if one was involved. Additional structural information may be included, however, they do not include floor plans. The Planning Department also has plat maps from 1898, 1912, 1914, 1920, and 1941 available for reference. These maps have original parcel numbers and show the “footprint” of all buildings, so you can see if your house had been constructed on any of the above dates. There may be additional information like Ohio Historic Inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, and more.

3. Cuyahoga County Fiscal Officer’s website, “general deed search” - [https://recorder.cuyahogacounty.us/searchs/generalsearches.aspx](https://recorder.cuyahogacounty.us/searchs/generalsearches.aspx)
   This is a way to find the original owner and/or build date, if you do not have it at this point, by creating a timeline of owners working backwards. You can start with yourself, but Cuyahoga County MyPlace has information going back a few decades. To save time, you can start with the earliest owner listed there. Search different terms or parameters if you don’t have any results right away. This can be a time-consuming place to look but has great information.
4. Cuyahoga County Archives
3951 Perkins Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44103
216.443.7250
The Archives’ hours vary and it is suggested you schedule an appointment for assistance. You can also email staff, they are responsive to emails and can scan and send you materials. The County Archives are a wealth of information if you know what to ask for. Make sure to add the information you find to your list of keywords.

MAPS: If your deed search was unsuccessful, the maps in the Archives show the various owners and when they acquired the property. This will give you a list of people who have owned the property and perhaps lived in the house. If you visit the building in person (recommended) ask to be taken to the room at the southwest corner of the building and look at the “big maps.” They are well organized and Cleveland Heights maps have the City’s name clearly labeled on the spine. There is a map index on the first page of each of the volumes. It is helpful to know your property’s original lot/parcel number when looking at these maps.

TAX RECORDS: Another way to pinpoint the date of your home’s construction is to review tax records, which are listed by the owner’s name. Once you have a list of owners, you can look their names up in the tax records. Your property’s value would have jumped dramatically in the year following the year your home was constructed. For example, if you see a big jump in 1925, your house was built in 1924.

CITY DIRECTORIES: These are the equivalent of phone books. However, in addition to the person’s name and address, his or her occupation was also listed. Once you get the names and dates, start looking those names up in the City Directory. Cross check to be sure that these property owners actually lived at your house and what exactly they did for a living. After 1930, a pink section of the directories is sorted by address, so you can simply look up your address and find out the name of the occupant. This can be fascinating: a bricklayer would have constructed a modest house, but made of brick; a shipbuilder may have used ship-lap siding on his home, etc. Once you find out what these people did, some of the idiosyncrasies of your house may begin to become clear!). There are several paper volumes, others are on microfilm, and some may be available online. Some are also available at CH-UH Main Library.

PHOTOS ON BUILDING CARDS: These are tax assessor’s cards and often have a 1950s-era photo of your house on them. Ask for the “Building Cards” for your house (you must have the address and the permanent parcel number). These help to see what your house looked like before windows or siding materials were changed. They’re a great guide if you’d like to restore your home to its original appearance—building materials and dimensions are shown and you can determine what portions of your house were added later.

Find more information about the architect, including when they were active and other works they may have designed.

The Cleveland Memory Project has an online photo archive, built and maintained by Cleveland State University. Search your address and other keywords. If you find any photos, be sure to check the metadata at the bottom of the page, as it might lead you to more information!
7. **Ohio Memory** [https://www.ohiomemory.org/](https://www.ohiomemory.org/)
   Very similar to Cleveland Memory, but this one is a collaborative program of Ohio History Connection and the State Library of Ohio.

8. **Cleveland Public Library** [www.cpl.org](http://www.cpl.org)

   **325 Superior Avenue NE**

   Cleveland Public Library, like the County Archives, has a wealth of information if you know what to ask for.

   **PHOTO ARCHIVE:** Some of the photos have been digitized, but not all of them. If you go in person, the Photo Archive has a whole box of photos for Cleveland Heights, however, you must wade through them in hopes of maybe finding a photo of your house. (Warning: odds are very slim!) If you don’t find a photo of your house, the time was well spent—you’ll love seeing all the old photos of our community!

   **CLEVELAND NECROLOGY FILE:** Once you’ve discovered the names of the property owners, you can find out more about them by looking through the library’s obituary index. You can also use your address (minus “street” or “road” in the database and search “keyword.” Sometimes people listed the address of the deceased in the obituary.

   [https://cpl.org/newsindex/](https://cpl.org/newsindex/) Choose necrology from the drop-down menu and enter your search terms.

   **MAPS:** Go to the Library’s map room and look around. Sanborn fire insurance maps are quite helpful and show a footprint of the building much like the plat maps available at City Hall. Navigating the database can take some practice, but type in your street name and a nearby cross street to zero in. The database is at:


   **PLAIN DEALER HISTORICAL (1845-1991):** Historical Plain Dealer offers full page and article images with searchable full text back to the first issue. You can access this database only at a CPL branch within Cleveland city limits. Go to [www.cpl.org](http://www.cpl.org), click “research” then “research databases,” then scroll down to “Plain Dealer Historical.” The collection includes digital reproductions providing access to every page from every available issue. Search by keyword, name, date, date ranges, article type, and issue. You can search your address (leave off “road” or “street”), street name only, owner name, architect name, etc. These searches often yield ads for property for sale, lost pets, or exciting happenings at your address. Oftentimes when a house was under construction, they didn’t list the street number, only the name, so be sure to search both your address and street name only. It is helpful to put the name in quotes like this: “1234 Main” to try and limit the search. Searching the names of owners can be interesting as well. You can pay per page to print or bring a flash drive where you can save the images free of charge.

   **MISC.:** There is also a newspaper clipping file on microfilm which is arranged by heading. These are best for the overall history of an area, rather than of a specific property. The Fine Arts department has files on many Cleveland architects. You might also like to look at their selection of old books and periodicals containing house plans, construction and decorating tips, as well as old architectural magazines, old Society magazines, and Sears Roebuck catalogs from the early 1900s and beyond.

9. **Cleveland Heights Main Library**

   **2345 Lee Road**

   The Sun Press is on microfilm back into the 1920s. It has gone by various names over the years but look under Sun Press in the microfilm drawer. Also, look at the City Directories from the 1920s and after.
10. Cleveland State University Library,  
    1860 E. 22nd Street  
The Cleveland Press clipping file is arranged by topic. You can look up names of people, places, or events and search out a file. Call 216-687-2449 for an appointment; limited hours of operation.

    (216) 721-5722  
    There is a fee to use the archive/library facilities for non-members but there is a wealth of information available if you are interested. These include a detailed photo archive, historic postcards, historic maps, books on Cleveland history, City Directories on microfilm, personal papers of prominent Clevelanders, architects’ files, and the Women’s Civic Club of Cleveland Heights’ manuscripts. There are many memoirs and interesting historical clippings and facts within this large box of information. The manuscript includes more general Cleveland Heights history, as opposed to specific information on residences. Some information has been digitized.

12. Cleveland Heights Historical Society  https://clevelandheightshistory.org/  
    This website has a lot of great articles written by members.

13. Kelvin Smith Library  http://library.case.edu/ksl/  
    This library has an interesting archive, Cleveland history books, old plan books, and old architectural, decorating, and construction books and periodicals. This is another good place to look for general local information.

Other resources
- **Social Media**- Look for historic-focused Facebook Groups. “Cleveland- Our Architectural Legacy” is a great one to crowdsource information from. There are large scale ones like this, but look for smaller neighborhood-focused ones as well.
- **Historic Preservation Design Guidelines** are a great resource for the history of Cleveland Heights, the different types of historic properties, the Landmark Commission, etc.  
- **Maps** of Cleveland Heights and surrounding areas:  
  - http://www.railsandtrails.com  
- **Genealogical** websites can help you research people once you’ve gotten their names. You can learn about former owners and even try to find individuals who will supply old house photos or other relevant information about the house's history. Ancestry.com is one of the more prevalent sites and is available by subscription or can be used free of charge at the Cleveland Heights libraries.
- **Blueprints** are very hard to find, but if you have a “kit house”, they may be available from the Library of Congress.
- **Findagrave.com**