

Researching Your Highland Park Home



- 1.If you have the title to your house, it provides the following information: document number, township and subdivision, block and lot number, and location within a specific lot. If you don't have the title to your house, it can be purchased from a title company. Some research can be done without the title (see below).
- 2.With information from the title record, go to the Recorder of Deeds, County Court House, 18 N. County Street, Waukegan, Illinois 60085 (847/360-6673), to check the land conveyances (records of the times the property has changed ownership) and the early title statements. You can trace the ownership of your home by checking the Grantee (purchaser) and Grantor (seller) indexes. Start with your own name in the grantee index. When you find the name of the grantor, search that name in the grantee index, and so forth.
- 3.Using the conveyances, you can check the deed numbers and look up each deed.
- 4.Tax records are available in the office of the County Treasurer, County Court House, 18 N. County Street, Waukegan, Illinois 60085 (847/360-6363). These records date from 1906.
- 5.Moraine Township maintains a list, by address, of all lots. Township records were compiled from information gathered in 1958 and may include a list of owners, age of the house, lot size, a physical description of the home (stories, fireplaces, basement, etc.), and a drawing of the house footprint (with square footage). The records also list the purchase price of the property for each sale as well as any building permits. The township office has photographs taken in 1958 of some homes. Records for older homes are less complete. Your voter registration card identifies your

township. The address for the Moraine Township office is 777 Central Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois 60035 (847/432-2100).

6. Assessment rolls for Deerfield Township are published in local newspapers. The Highland Park Public Library has microfilm copies of the local newspapers. For older homes, check the Sheridan Road News-Letter, July 8, 1899 and July 6, 1900 or the Highland Park Press on July 8, 1915, July 10, 1919, August 16, 1923, August 6, 1931 or August 24, 1939. A complete assessment of the township was published in those years, but assessment rolls were published each year to list properties with valuation changes during the previous year.

1. The Lake County Assessment Office webpage

<http://assessor.lakecountyil.gov/Assessments/Pages/Assessment-Information.aspx> provides the current assessment and information on the build date and other property details (lot size, square footage of the house). Search for information using the PIN or address.

8. The Highland Park Community Development Planning Division, 1150 Half Day Road (847/432-0808) maintains building records, arranged by address, for houses in Highland Park. These records date from the late 1920s. Records can include name of original owner, architect or general contractor, date built, additions, remodeling or any work that required a building permit. Highland Park streets were renumbered in October 1950, so if your house was built before that date, Building Dept. records also provide the original street number. The Archivist and the Information & Reader Services Librarians can assist you to determine previous street numbers for your house.

9. Architectural Surveys have been conducted for many sections of the City of Highland Park. These are available online at www.cityhpil.com/index.aspx?NID=419. The Surveys provide a general introduction to the survey area, brief biographical details about architects represented in that area, an overview of architectural styles, and a listing, by street address, for each house in the survey area, giving its architectural style, build date, and when known, the name of the architect.

10. Atlases and plat maps may provide more information on previous owners of the property. Ask for these at the Recorder of Deeds office. The Waukegan Historical Society (847/336-1859) has plat maps dating from 1861. Highland Park Public Library, 494 Laurel Ave. (847/432-0216) has Lake County atlases for 1885, 1896, and 1907. The 1907 atlas shows lot and block numbers. Due to their fragile condition, these atlases are available at the Library by appointment only. The 1907 atlas is available online through Ancestry Library Edition. Search Ancestry's card catalog for U.S., Indexed County Land Ownership Maps, 1860-1918. Contact the Information & Reader Services librarians for assistance.

11. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps are available on microfilm at the Highland Park Public Library. These maps show the building footprint, number of stories, type of roof, and construction of dwellings. The maps also include other buildings located on the property (sheds, stables, garages, etc.). The maps indicate the width and names of streets, property boundaries, building use, and house, lot, and block numbers. The Library has maps for 1900, 1907, 1912, 1918, 1924, and 1933.

12. The Archives at the Highland Park Public Library may contain information about your house. You can search the Archives catalog from the Library's website. Enter the name of your street (do not enter the house number). The three principal collections are identified as At Properties, Real Estate Properties, and House File in the Archives catalog.

13. Local realtors may have information about your house.

14. Talk with neighbors who have lived in the area for several years. They may have information about your home's previous owners or changes to the property.

15. The Highland Park Public Library has street directories for Highland Park for 1919, 1922, and 1951. These show who was living at your address in those years. The 1919 and 1922 directories are arranged by occupant's name, not street address. Search by the original street number of your house in pre-1950 directories. Street directories give the name of the occupant, spouse, occupation, and telephone number. In some cases, they also provide a business address for the occupant. Street directories are available online through Ancestry Library Edition. In the catalog, search U.S. City Directories 1822-1989. Highland Park addresses were listed in the Waukegan or Evanston directories (which covered the North Shore) from as early as 1903.

16. Once you have the names of previous owners, you can search through biographical sources at the Highland Park Public Library. Highland Park: The First Hundred Years (copyright 1969) and Pioneer to Commuter: The Story of Highland Park (by Marvyn Wittelle, c1958) are two good sources for local history and biographical information. The Highland Park Public Library also has indexes to the local newspapers for 1874 - 2009. These include obituary indexes.

17. For details on the architectural style of your house, check A Field Guide to American Houses (Virginia McAlester, c2013) or other books that illustrate house styles. Highland Park: American Suburb at Its Best (c1982) and Highland Park by Foot or Frame: an Architectural and Historical Odyssey (c1980) provide architectural information for some homes in Highland Park.

18. If a well-known architect designed your house, research him/her in architectural resources at libraries or historical societies. The Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60603-6110 (312/443-5666) have extensive files on architects.

19. Visit the Highland Park Public Library for assistance on any aspect of your research. The Archivist and the Information and Reader Services librarians will help you locate the materials listed above.

20. Keep records of improvements and changes that you make to your house. Take photographs of your house and landscaping. Share the results of your research with the Highland Park Public Library!

When visiting any government office or agency, please telephone in advance. Appointments may be required. Access to some documents may be restricted or may require retrieval or research assistance by an employee of that office. In some cases, you

may be required to file a Freedom of Information Act request to view documents.

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