
Historic WA County Recorder's Office Records

The Washington County Recorder's Office is the keeper of property records including mortgages, warranty deeds and, later, birth and death certificates. Much of the historic mortgage and warranty deed information can be obtained by first searching for the tract record and then looking up individual documents using the book/page number system. This research can be done in-person at the County Government Center.

- Using Recorder Office Records, search legal description Tract Pages.
- Once the tract pages have downloaded, navigate to the block page(s).
- Copy all useful information (i.e. Book, Page, Grantor, Grantee, Yes, and Kind of Instrument) for lot records.
- Using the WA County Recorder Office Records, search Book Type, Book and Page to generate Warranty Deeds and Mortgage Records relevant to the property.
 - ◇ These records will identify the key parties and identify a dollar amount. This information will be used to help determine the occupant history (to be researched through City Directories) as well as the approximate date of property improvements.
 - ◇ Noting the names of those who lived in the home will be used when researching City

Washington County Historical Society's Name Index

Washington County Historical Society's Name Index brings together indexes of important books, government records, and other documents that tell the story of the people of Washington County, Minnesota. Combining over 152 different sources, including birth, death, and census records along with other unique community resources. Searching by last name or full name, index records will display the source of information, the location within the source, as well as other uniquely identifying information to reference.

Stillwater Public Library's St. Croix Collection

City Directories

City Directories are a listing of residents, businesses, organizations (including members), etc. and their location within the City. These resources were precursors to a city phone book. While the Stillwater Public Library's St. Croix Collection has 23 directory resources (dating back to 1876) available, https://collection.mndigital.org/?f%5Bcollection_name_ssi%5D%5B%5D=Stillwater+Public+Library has Stillwater City Directories from 1882-83, 1887, 1889-99, 1890-1891, 1892-93, and 1896-97. Minnesota Digital Library's online system allows users to search by text.

Vital Records

The following records are available:

- Washington County microfilmed Tax records
- Birth (1870-1981), Death (1870-1961), Marriage (1843-1849 and 1849-1875) County Record Indexes
- Washington County Marriage Index Census records (available through Ancestry.com)
- Minnesota Territorial Census Schedules, 1849 – 1855. (Microfilm)
- Minnesota State Population Census Schedules, Washington County, MN, 1857 – 1905. (Microfilm)

In addition to local, state and federally-produced documents, many of the local churches (Church of St. Mary, Parish of St. Joseph, and Parish of St. Michael) all kept baptismal, marriage, and death records). These resources are also available in the St. Croix Collection.

Miscellaneous Records

- Vertical Files (Newspapers and Scrapbooks) to search through birth notices and obituaries and documented individual and family histories
- Photographs: Sinclair Stereopticon Slides (approximately 1876 to 1890) – also available on <https://www.mndigital.org/>



Stillwater House Histories

A guide to help you begin
researching your Stillwater home



Stillwater's Heirloom & Landmark Sites Program

Brought to you by the City of Stillwater's
Heritage Preservation Commission

Finding, Documenting and Preserving Our History

The City of Stillwater's Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) manages the Heirloom Homes and Landmark Sites (HHLS) program which was designed to recognize properties that contribute to the community's historic character.

To be considered for inclusion into the City's preservation recognition or designation programs, the history of the property must be documented. This can be done by anyone so long as they explore all of the publicly-available resources to form the most complete history of the property. The Stillwater HPC has developed this how-to guide to assist novice researchers in conducting the research necessary for inclusion into the City's preservation -related recognition or designation programs. This is an introductory-level guide to start learning about house histories.

The purpose of this document is to identify sources of information to piece together the history of a property. By utilizing a multitude of locally-available resources, a researcher is likely to obtain specific dates and time-periods for which a property did or did not have improvements on it. This, in conjunction with ownership records, can help piece together the property's general history (such as when property improvements were likely made, who lived in the home and for how long, what the valuation of the residence and/or other personal property included).

With general time periods and occupant information, researchers can shift to other types of local records to gain more information about the prominence of residents within the community. Local records provide greater understanding of when occupants came to the United States and Stillwater, what their occupations were, and what associations they may have had within the community. This can help build a property history as a narrative that would be interesting to read.

Getting Started

- Before starting any historic property research, you must know the physical street address and legal description of the property.
- Review the City's Neighborhood history reports and Historic and Architectural Inventory forms to identify any information already determined about the property.
- Consult the City of Stillwater's Property information Lookup at <http://property.stillwater-mn.org/> for planning, zoning and building permit records. City of Stillwater's HPC staff liaison may conduct file review upon request.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps were created during the late 19th and early 20th centuries to assist nationwide fire insurance companies. These maps provide a pictorial description of properties and their neighborhoods, while identifying the types of improvements on a property. Stillwater's 1884-1924 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps have been digitized by the Library of Congress and are available by searching online at:

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/>

Bird's Eye Maps

Bird's Eye maps (1870 and 1879) are publicly displayed for viewing in the Stillwater Public library.



Historic Building Permit Records

In conjunction with the Stillwater Public Library, the City of Stillwater archived nearly 3,000 1886-1945 historic building permits with the Minnesota Digital Library. These resources can provide specific dates when a building permit was issued for a property and provide insight to repairs and alterations that occurred to specific structures within the City.

The permits were issued by legal description, making them less user-friendly. Searching a specific property using a number of different input combinations may produce results. However, not all structures constructed between 1886 and 1945 received a building permit. Thus, finding a specific property's historic construction record may not be available.

Visit Stillwater Public Library's Minnesota Digital Library Contributor page at https://collection.mndigital.org/?f%5Bcollection_name_ssi%5D%5B%5D=Stillwater+Public+Library.

Click the "building permits" tab under the *Physical Format* sidebar. When the records have sorted to only Stillwater building permits, users can search"

- a. The street number and/or name; or
- b. Portions of the legal description; or
- c. The street and street side (i.e. north, east, south, or west)

By using the *Advanced Search* feature, more specific results will be produced. For example, 1422 Martha Street North's legal description is Lots 1-2 and the East 20' of Lot 3, Block 2, Wilkin's Addition to Stillwater. A good *Advanced Search* by this legal could be:

"lot 1" and "block 2" and "wilkins"

If a permit for the subject property is found, note the building permit number, year of issuance, type of permit, and name of the property owner to help piece together property history, changes over time, and information on occupants (to be researched in City Directories).