Building Research

How to Research a New York City Building

Look up the building in Pratt Cat

- Search under the name of the building OR
- Search under New York (N.Y.) plus the name of the building OR
- Search using alternate names of the building OR
- Search using a spelled-out form of the address OR
- Search with a broader category search in Subject Browse
  
  e.g. New York (N.Y.) – Churches
       Apartment Houses – United States – New York (N.Y.)

Look up the building in online and print indexes

(See listings below)

Architects and architectural firms

- Search in Pratt Cat
- Search in online and print indexes
- Browse biographical dictionaries for leads (see titles below)
- If the architect or firm name is unknown look up the building in the *AIA Guide to New York City* or in another guide book.

Landmark buildings & districts

- Keyword search using the name of the historic district
  
  e.g. Fort Green
- Subject Browse using the following searches:
  
  Historic buildings – New York (N.Y.) – Conservation and restoration
  Architecture – New York (N.Y.) – Conservation and restoration
  Brooklyn – (New York, N.Y.) – Buildings – Conservation and restoration
  New York (N.Y.) – Buildings – Conservation and restoration

Buildings that no longer exist

- Try searching in older guidebooks (see titles below)
- Look for historic photographs (see NYPL note below)
- Look for published news reports and articles
  
  e.g. Try the *New York Times Index* and microfilm collection
Drawings, plans & archival materials

• Browse the COPAR research guide, Architectural Research Materials in New York City and the Five Boroughs, for archival collections elsewhere in the city. This guide also includes information about using the Department of Buildings (see listing below) files in each borough. Call# 720.72 C734A

To find a block and lot number

• For a Manhattan Building, consult the Sanborn Manhattan Land Book (at the circulation/reserve desk, call# 912.74 S198).
• For a Brooklyn Building, consult the Sanborn Building and Property Atlas of Brooklyn, New York (on the map shelf, call# 912.74 R868BR).
• For a Queens Building, consult the Sanborn Building and Property Atlas of Queens, New York (1st floor info ref. reading room, call# 912.74 R868Q).

Keywords

If searching an architectural style, period, type of building, or geographic area:
• Try a General Keyword search
• Try using Subject Browse

Note: Please see a Librarian for more advanced search techniques

Resources

• Books
• Journals
• Databases
• Websites
**BOOKS**

**Guides:**


*King’s Handbook of New York City.* King, Moses. Boston, MA: 1893. 917.471 K53K Rare Books/Ask at Ref. Desk


**Dictionaries and Encyclopedias:**


**Biographical Sources:**

**JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES**

**Print Indexes:**
Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature (1890 – present)

Poole’s Index to 19th Century Periodicals (1802 – 1906)

New York Times Index (1851 – present)
   Some = 3rd Floor
   Some = 1st Floor Reference, Index Tables

**Online Indexes (Databases):**

**Art Full Text**
Art Full Text is a bibliographic database that indexes and abstracts articles from periodicals published throughout the world. Full-text coverage for selected periodicals is also included. Periodical coverage includes English-language periodicals, yearbooks, and museum bulletins, as well as periodicals published in French, Italian, German, Japanese, Spanish, Dutch, and Swedish. In addition to articles, Art Full Text indexes reproductions of works of art that appear in indexed periodicals. Indexing coverage begins 1984; abstracting coverage begins with January 1994. The abstracts range from 50 to 300 words and describe the content and scope of the source articles. Full-text coverage begins in 1997.

**Art Index Retrospective**
Art Index Retrospective is a bibliographic database that cumulates citations to Art Index volumes 1-32 of the printed index published between 1929-1984. The database cites articles from periodicals published throughout the world. Periodical coverage includes English-language periodicals, yearbooks, and museum bulletins, as well as periodicals published in French, Italian, German, Spanish, and Dutch. In addition to articles, Art Index Retrospective indexes reproductions of works of art that appear in indexed periodicals.

**Art Bibliographies Modern**
Abstracts of journal articles, books, essays, exhibition catalogs, dissertations and exhibition reviews with comprehensive bibliographic coverage of modern and contemporary art, architecture, design and photography. The time period coverage includes the 19th and 20th centuries. Covers literature published since 1974. A list of periodicals indexed is available. Updated monthly.

**Bibliography of the History of Art**
The Bibliography of the History of Art indexes and abstracts articles, art-related books, conference proceedings, dissertations, and art exhibition and dealer’s catalogs. This extensive and comprehensive index covers European and American art from late antiquity to the present.
Avery Index
Most comprehensive listing of journal articles on architecture and design, history and practice of architecture, landscape architecture, city planning, historic preservation and interior design and decoration. Indexes articles from nearly 800 US and foreign architectural journals published worldwide, 75% of which are not indexed in any other source. Includes articles from previous electronic version as well as records converted from Avery Library card file, with records dating from the 1860s to the present. A list of periodical titles indexed is available.

EBSCO Master File Select
Contains full text and citations for articles from over 750 journals and newspapers in all subjects. A list of titles covered is available.

EXPANDED ACADEMIC ASAP
Indexes approximately 5 million articles in over 1600 general interest and scholarly journals in all disciplines published since 1980. Full text is available for the contents of approximately 750 journal titles. A list of journals indexed is available. Updated daily.

Grove Dictionary of Art
Contains over 41,000 articles on the art and architecture of Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Pacific, with links to images and further information in museum and other art-related web sites. Help is available

RIBA Catalog
The online catalog of the library of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Indexes articles from over 300 architecture journals as well as books, multimedia, and architects' biographies. A list of journals indexed is available. Covers early 1980's-present. Updated daily.

Wilson Select Plus
Full text articles in science, humanities, education and business. Includes US and international professional publications, academic journals, and trade magazines.

WorldCat
Use WorldCat to search for information about books, periodicals, and other materials held in OCLC member libraries worldwide. Updated daily. Place Interlibrary Loan requests electronically through WORLDCAT.
WEBSITES

Selected Bibliography

New York Historical Society
An online guide to conducting architectural research at the New York Historical Library. Both print and online resources are discussed. Additional contact information for other resources in New York City are included. For further information visit their website: www.nyhistory.org/library/research.html. Or call: 212.873.3400 ext. 8, 10am – 5pm for simple questions like “who lived in my building and the adjacent ones in 1910?”

Department of Buildings
Records include construction applications, building permits, architectural drawings and plans. All research must be done in person. Call ahead or visit their website for additional information: http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/html/collections/collections_dob.shtml.

Manhattan: 60 Hudson Street, 5th Floor 212.312.8904
Brooklyn: 210 Joralemon Street, 8th Floor 718.802.3693
Bronx: 1932 Arthur Avenue 718.579.6920
Queens: 126-06 Queens Blvd. 718.520.3401
Staten Island: Boro Hall 718.816.2315

Register’s Offices
Documents relating to building ownership (deeds, mortgages, etc.) can be found at these offices. All research must be done in person. Call ahead for information.

Manhattan: 31 Chambers Street 212.788.8528
Brooklyn: 210 Joralemon Street 718.802.3590
Bronx: 1932 Arthur Avenue 718.579.6821
Queens: 144-06 94th Avenue 718.298.7000

Municipal Archives
Every building in the five boroughs was photographed between 1939 and 1941 as part of an appraisal project. Prints of these black and white photographs can be purchased (download order form. Cost is $30.00 per print, plus a $3.00 mailing charge). Please call 212.788.8580 or go online: http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/html/about/archives.shtml.

Landmarks Preservation Commission
All changes and repairs to designated landmarks and historic buildings and districts are recorded and overseen by this organization. In addition they maintain reports for some historic districts and some individual buildings. Call them at 212.487.6800 or visit them online: www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/lpc/home.html. Also, check out the LPC website for “A Guide to Research Resources in New York City”: http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/lpc/html/designation/faq3.html.

New York Public Library
The Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Geneology, 42nd and 5th Avenue, Room 121.
This division includes two important photographic collections. 1) Photographic Views of New York City, 1879s to 1970s, and 2) the Lloyd Acker Collection of New York City Photographs 1935-1975. The first is indexed by address, subject and building name. The second is indexed by address. Please call 212.930.0828 or visit them online: www.nypl.org/research/chss/lhg/genea.html.
Other Important Addresses:
Brooklyn Historical Society
128 Pierrepont Street
Brooklyn, NY  11201
718.222.4111

Brooklyn Public Library
Grand Army Plaza
Brooklyn, NY  11238
718.230.2100

Municipal Archives
31 Chambers Street, Suite 103
New York, NY  10007
212.788.8577

Museum of the City of New York
1220 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY  10029
212.534.1672

New York Historical Society
2 West 77th Street
New York, NY  10024
212.873.3400

New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Science Library
Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street
New York, NY  10018
212.930.0830

Created: August 22, 2005
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