

RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE

A Quincy Preserves! Workshop

conducted by Paul Larson
15 May 1995

I Construction History

A Objectives

Setting the dates of property purchase, original construction start and completion, and major alterations and additions

[Determining a chronology for specific parts of the house in its present state]

Identifying the original owner and occupant

[Discovering the architect and builder (a task for the lucky)]

B Resources

Gardner Museum of Architecture and Design

address files of Quincy buildings

Sanborn Atlases, 1926 (update of 1898) and 1938 and 1956 (updates of 1927)

annual county tax assessment books (hard copy) – check for accessibility

architect files

County Offices

annual county tax assessment books (microfilm in Treasurer's Office)

deeds and mortgages (Recorder's Office) – *deed index at the library*

Quincy Public Library

Sanborn Atlases, 1883, 1888, 1898, 1927 (microfilm only) *fisher*

Quincy City Directories, 1848-1971 (microfilm), 1938-present (hard copy)

Andreas' Atlas of Adams County (rural pre-1872 properties only)

Historical Society of Quincy and Adams County

Quincy City Directories, 1848-present (hard copy)

[historic bird's eye views of Quincy]

[construction documents]

C Methodology

1. Check the building files at Gardner Museum. If the building has been surveyed, and all you wish is original construction information, steps 2 through 6 can be omitted.
2. Get a legal description of your property from your deed. A rough legal description of platted properties is also accessible from the 1927 Sanborn Atlas or its updates. *City assessors office*
3. Make a guess at the periods of original construction and obvious additions, e.g., a front porch, based on comparison with surveyed or otherwise dated buildings.
4. Research tax records looking for surges in assessment during the estimated periods of significant construction. Beware of 1872-73, 1909-10, and 1919-20, when the tax base dramatically increased for all county properties. The increase was c 300% in 1872, 67% in 1909, and 50% in 1920. Only increases above these percentages for these years indicate improvements. Record property description, tax payer's name (in far right-hand column), and assessed valuation for each year researched; also changes in tax payer between assessment and payment as indicated by deletions.
5. Look up names of tax payers immediately after surge years to see if they occupied the house. If the taxpayer's name does not show up at your address in the city directories, it can be