



Zeeland Historical Society House Plaque Research Guide

The following resources will help you complete the information required to obtain a ZHS House Plaque.

Architectural Style, Construction, and Building Materials

Determining your home's architectural style is a great place to start your research. Knowing the style may help you narrow down the build date. The following resources will help figure out the architectural style of your home:

- *Field Guide to American Houses (Revised): The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*, by Virginia Savage McAlester (Knopf, 2015)
- *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, by John J.G. Blumenson (W. W. Norton & Company, 1979)
- *American House Styles: A Concise Guide*, by John Milnes Baker (Countryman Press, 2018)

Building materials are an important part of your home's history and may give clues as to when it was built or whether the floor plan changed over the years. Inspect your home to find what materials were used in its construction. Look for the following:

- Siding type
- Type of framing nails used
- Hardware (doorknobs, window mechanisms, etc.)
- Foundation type
- Knob and tube wiring

House History

The following resources will help you find the date your house was built, the original owner, and previous owners.

1. **Property Deeds**—Property deed searches will help you find ownership records for the property, which can help you compile your list of homeowners. However, you must still determine when your house was built on the property.
 - Ottawa County Register of Deeds Document Search:

- Search online at:
<https://www.miottawa.org/Deeds/noLogin.jsessionid=E2DB7ABCB594587CAC4D14F7CBB3BBF>
- Search in person at Ottawa County Research Library, 414 Washington Ave., Room 115, Grand Haven, 49417
- Tips:
 - These searches are easiest if you begin with yourself and work backward.
 - These records can provide clues as to when your house was built, especially by looking closely at when the property was sold and for how much.

2. **City Directories** – City directories can be cross-referenced with names obtained from property deeds. Finding the earliest date your address was listed as a residence can indicate when it was built or help you narrow down a timeframe.

- Where to find city directories:
 - Zeeland Historical Society, 37 E. Main Avenue, Zeeland 49464
 - 1927 – 1928 Holland and Zeeland Cities and Rural Directory
 - 1918 – 1923 The Farm Journal Illustrated Rural Directory of Ottawa County
 - Polk's Holland and Zeeland City Directories
 - 1940, 1945, 1950, 1960 – 1962, 1965 – 1967, 1969, 1972 – 1974, 1976 – 1978, 1980 – 1983, 1991, 1992, 1997, 1998
 - Assorted telephone directories
 - 1921, 1922, 1924, 1930, 1955, 1957
 - Howard Miller Library, 14 S. Church Street, Zeeland 49464
 - Polk's Holland and Zeeland directories
 - 1945, 1960, 1962, 1965 – 1973, 1975 – 1988, 1990 – 1994, 1996 – 2002
 - Herrick District Library, 300 S. River Avenue, Holland 49423
- Tips:
 - These directories are organized by name. If attempting to search only by address, you will have to read each entry as addresses are not indexed.
 - Telephone directories only listed individuals who owned a phone.

3. **Census Records** – Census records after 1910 include residents' street addresses and can be used to show that a house existed at an address for a given year. Most census records can only be accessed through a subscription via sites like Ancestry.com. The National Archives lists sites where digitized census records can be accessed at:

- <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/online-resources>

4. **Newspapers** – Newspapers can be used to search for articles about your house being built if you know an approximate date. They can also be searched to find information about the people who have lived in your home.
- The *Zeeland Expositor* newspaper, 1893 – 1898
 - Online with a Howard Miller Library card at:
<https://www.proquest.com/hnpzeelandrecord/>
 - In person at the Howard Miller Library, 14 S. Church, Zeeland
 - The *Zeeland Record* newspaper
 - Digitized issues from 1898 – 2006 are available online with a Howard Miller Library card at: <https://www.proquest.com/hnpzeelandrecord/>
 - Issues 1898 – present are available in person at the Howard Miller Library, 14 S. Church, Zeeland
 - The *Holland Sentinel*
 - Issues from 1912 – 1952 at the Hope College Archives and Special Collections, Van Wylen Library, Hope College
 - Later issues at the Herrick District Library, 300 S. River Avenue, Holland
 - The *Holland City News*, 1872 – 1977
 - Online through the Hope College Archives and Special Collections at:
<https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/newspapers/>
 - Tips:
 - Digitized newspapers can be searched by keyword. Try searching by address, street name, surname, or date.
5. **Property Tax Assessment Records** – Tax assessments are recorded each year and can be used to trace increases in property taxes. A large increase from one year to the next usually indicates that a house was built on the property.
- City of Zeeland Tax Assessment Records
 - Located at the Zeeland City Hall, 21 S. Elm Street, Zeeland
 - Zeeland Township Tax Assessment Records
 - Located at the Zeeland Charter Township Hall, 6582 Byron Road, Zeeland
 - Holland Charter Township Tax Assessment Records
 - Located at the Holland Township Hall, 353 North 120th Avenue, Holland
 - Available online at:
<https://www.hct.holland.mi.us/index.php/property-tax-lookup>
6. **Sanborn Maps** – Sanborn Fire Insurance maps were created in Michigan from 1883 to 1970. They were made every 5-10 years and show any buildings located on a property, this includes houses, garages, sheds, etc. These can help you narrow down the build date or see how the structures on your property have changed over time.

- A selection is available online through the Library of Congress at:
<https://www.loc.gov/maps/?fa=location:michigan%7Clocation:ottawa+county>
- Sanborn maps 1867 -1970 are available at the Spring Lake District Library, 123 Exchange Street, Spring Lake, 49456

7. Plat Maps – Township plat maps show houses on properties represented by a black square.

- Plat maps available at the Zeeland Historical Society:
 - 1850 (photocopy) town plat of Zeeland
 - 1863 (photocopy) of Zeeland Township
 - 1876 Ottawa County cities and townships
 - 1897 Ottawa County cities and townships
 - 1912 Ottawa County cities and townships
 - 1930 Ottawa County cities and townships
 - First landowners of Zeeland Township compiled by Dr. Don Riddering
 - 1950s Ottawa County farm plat book
 - 1976 Ottawa County plat book
 - 1989 Ottawa County plat book
 - Plat maps available online through the University of Michigan at:
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micounty/>
 - A selection of plat maps is available at the Howard Miller Library and the Herrick District Library

8. Aerial views – Aerial views or Birds'-eye views are artist renderings that depict buildings and streets from overhead.

- Lithographs of aerial views available at the Zeeland Historical Society
 - 1880 and 1907 lithographs of the City of Zeeland
 - 1908 lithograph (photocopy) of the town of Overisel

9. Photographs – Photographs can provide information on the interior or exterior of your home and can show you how your home has or hasn't changed.

- Visit the Zeeland Historical Society's online catalog and search by keyword at:
<https://zeelandhistory.catalogaccess.com/home>
- Tips:
 - Try searching for previous owners by last name, sometimes family photographs were taken in front of their house.
 - Try searching by street name instead of house number.