

## LOCAL RESOURCES

### Municipal & Township Offices

When a property owner constructs a new building or addition, or completes a renovation, a building permit must be issued. You can request to view plans, permits and any relevant zoning bylaws from the planning department of the township or municipality in which the property is located. Fees may apply.

### Local Historic Interest Groups

There are many local organizations including the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (St. Thomas-Elgin branch), the Ontario Genealogical Society (Elgin County branch) and the St. Thomas Municipal Heritage Committee, that may have done research on the property, or may have additional knowledge and resources to share.



## CONTACT US

450 Sunset Drive  
St. Thomas, Ontario  
T: 519-631-1460  
E: [archives@elgin.ca](mailto:archives@elgin.ca)

*Every home has a history.  
Discover yours with Elgin  
County Archives.*

ELGIN  
COUNTY  
ARCHIVES

PROPERTY RESEARCH

# GETTING STARTED

There are many resources available locally and online to facilitate researching a historic home or building in Elgin County. Before delving into historic records, there are a few things you can do to get started.

## **Determine Legal Description of Property**

All official records relating to a property will be listed under its legal description, rather than its present street address. A legal description usually involves a lot and concession number, or a plan number if located in a town or city. This information can be found on the deed for a property, or on property tax records. Staff at Elgin County Archives can also assist in determining the legal description.

## **Examine Architectural Style**

Make notes on key architectural features and consult secondary sources on architecture available at the local library or in the Elgin County Archives Reference Collection. This may help determine the approximate age of the building, and may also provide insight into when renovations or additions were completed.

## **Collect Contextual Information**

Speak with neighbours, local history groups and the previous owners, if possible, who may provide first-hand knowledge of the community's history, how the property has changed over time and who lived there.

# RESOURCES AT ELGIN COUNTY ARCHIVES

## **Abstract Indexes**

These books list all registered instruments, or transactions, that occurred against a property from crown ownership to the present day. Entries provide information about ownership and property value, as well as the division of land. Elgin County Archives has select books available to view on microfilm, and they can be accessed online via OnLand.

## **Property Tax Assessment Rolls**

These volumes were compiled annually for tax purposes. Listings provide information about ownership, and comparing changes in annual property values may provide insight into when a home or building was constructed.

## **Fire Insurance Plans**

These plans contain detailed information about the physical composition of every building within a surveyed area. Elgin County Archives has plans for Aylmer, Springfield, Belmont, Port Burwell, Shedden, Vienna, Fingal, West Lorne, Port Stanley, Rodney, Dutton and St. Thomas.

## **City and County Directories**

Directories are published annual listings of a community's residents and businesses. They often provide information about occupation and marital status.

## **Atlases and Maps**

Elgin County Archives has atlases and maps which indicate lot holders. We also have miscellaneous maps and plans that can be searched via our online database ([elgincounty.ca/archives](http://elgincounty.ca/archives)).

## **Elgin County Archives Online Database**

You can search our online database at the archives, or from the comfort of your home. Discover photographs or records related to the property or people who lived at or owned the property. Many photographs and records are digitized, but you can also request to view records of interest in person with a visit to our reference room.

# ONLINE RESOURCES

## **OnLand: Ontario Land Registry Access**

<https://www.onland.ca/ui/>

An online service that allows you to search Abstract Index Books from Ontario Land Registry Offices, from crown ownership to the present. Requires the legal description of the property.

## **Canadian County Atlas Digital Project**

<http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas>

A searchable database of property owners' names which appear on township maps in county atlases. Township maps, portraits and properties are available, with links from the property owners' names in the database.