



## Historic Landmark Nomination Guide

La Crosse Heritage Preservation Commission

### Researching Your Property

Below is a list of documents that will enrich and support your Historic Landmark Nomination. Including these documents will establish the historic importance of your property.

**Obituaries:** Many people say “I wouldn’t even know where to begin researching”. Obituaries of previous owners or occupants are a great place to start your research, as they basically provide a person’s life story. From this one source you can easily learn a person’s date of birth, where they were born, who their parents were, their education and employment, when they were married, how many children they had, etc. Obituaries can help confirm or deny other evidence and provide leads to other relevant data.

**City Directories:** La Crosse City Directories from 1866-1924 are available online at the La Crosse Public Library Archives website, located here:  
<https://archives.lacrosselibrary.org/local-history/city-and-county-directories/>

Similar to a phone book, City Directories will list your property street address as it appeared that year. As you begin your search, be aware that some street numbers *and* street names may have changed from what they originally were (i.e. Liberty Street was Berlin Street prior to WW2). City Directories were printed approximately every two years, so they will give you an approximate year of construction (though it may be off by a year or two). City Directories will also list the names of occupants and their profession. Usually the occupant(s) are also the owners of the property, but this isn’t always the case. To confirm the owner and date of construction, cross-reference Property Tax Records.

**Property Tax Records:** La Crosse Property Tax Records are hand-written ledgers available in-person at the La Crosse Public Library Archives. For a given year, Property Tax Records list the legal owner(s) of a property, including the value of the land, the value of the improvement (i.e. house or building) the total value, the tax amount paid and the owners signature. An individual would be taxed on a home at the end of the year, but only if the structure was finished and habitable. If 1915 Tax Records only list a value for the land *and* no improvement, but 1916 lists a value for the land *and* the improvement, the home was considered built in 1916. The values listed can also help you determine the year major alterations were performed if they significantly increased the value.



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**Water Tap Records:** La Crosse Water Tap Records usually consist of two documents, an Application to Connect Water Lines and a Plumbers Return. These documents also provide the owners name, the property address at the time the applications were completed and the dates the work was performed.

**Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:** Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were very accurate, hand-drawn maps used to document buildings for fire insurance purposes. Maps visually depict the shape and scale of a structure when built and detail if the structure had a wood frame, brick or metal siding on a wood frame or if the structural support was solid brick walls or concrete block. Maps after 1906 are currently available in-person at the La Crosse Public Library Archives and the UWL Murphy Library Area Research Center (ARC). Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps are also available on the Wisconsin Historical Society website for the following years at these locations:

1884:

<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/maps/id/6442/rec/7>

1887:

<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/maps/id/6465/rec/6>

1891:

<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/maps/id/6504/rec/1>

1906:

<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/maps/id/6615/rec/2>

### Historic Photos:

The La Crosse Public Library Archives and UWL Murphy Library Area Research Center (ARC) have a literal treasure trove of historic photography which are separated in different collections. Some collection are just photos of entire blocks (i.e. the entire 1400 block of Cass Street), other collections might be photos of individual properties (i.e. just 1434 Cass Street). You can also potentially find photos of the original owners of your property, or other historically relevant photos. For example, if the original owner of your property was a doctor, he or she may appear in a collection of medical photography.