

**NYU JACK BRAUSE LIBRARY**  
**A GUIDE TO RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF A BUILDING**

From Christopher Gray, "A Guide to Researching the History of a Building," *New York Times*, 2 July 1995, p.5 ©

To complete an in-depth study of a building, the only information you need to provide is the block and lot number. New York City information centers provide the rest!

1. First, ascertain whether or not your building is historically significant. This information can be attained by calling: **The Landmarks Preservation Commission** at **212 669-7700**.
2. The next place on your agenda should be:

**Manhattan Office of the Department of Buildings**  
**280 Broadway, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, 9am-5pm.**  
**212 566-5000**

Here you can use the public access terminals of the computer building application index. Record keeping started in June 1866. (Later for boroughs other than Manhattan). They have some information and databases available on their website, including complaints and violations and recent jobs performed on the property: [www.nyc.gov/html/dob/html/bis.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dob/html/bis.html)

3. Now, hit the pavement again and go to:

**Municipal Archives**  
**31 Chambers Street #103**  
**212 788-8580**

Here you will find the Department of Building's docket books. These are yearly summaries on microfilm.

4. For title records, visit the **Office of the City** at **66 John Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor, 212 361-7550**. Also, try their automated City Register System (ACRIS) [a836-acris.nyc.gov/Scripts/Coverpage.dll/index](http://a836-acris.nyc.gov/Scripts/Coverpage.dll/index). This database allows a search for property records by block and lot numbers, document type or party name; selected scanned documents may be viewed.
5. Now that you have the dates of the building, you can check the census at the **New York Public Library, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Fifth Ave, 212 340-0849**. Go to the History Room and ask Barbara Hilman or any available librarian to assist you on how to use their records.
6. Finally, to determine the personal information on residents or owners and other building facts go to:

**New York Historical Society**  
**2 West 77<sup>th</sup> Street at Central Park West**  
**Open Tuesday-Saturday 10-5**  
**212 873-3400**

To further investigate the people affiliated with the building look in: Byron and Valerie Falk's *Comprehensive New York Times Personal Name Index*.

**Other Helpful Websites:**

**New York City Property Information System (Department of Finance)**  
[www.nyc.gov/html/dof/home.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/home.html)

click on "Real Estate Tax" then "Assessment Roll"

\*Access the Real Estate Tax Assessment Roll

\*Determine the property tax rate and amount, and market value of any property in the five boroughs.

\*View lot and building size.

**Department of Housing Preservation and Development**  
[167.153.4.71/hpdonline/provide\\_address.aspx](http://167.153.4.71/hpdonline/provide_address.aspx)

\*Search for Building Registration

\*Search for Housing Maintenance Code Violations

**New York City Rent Guidelines Board**  
[www.housingnyc.com](http://www.housingnyc.com)

\*View complete list of rent stabilized buildings

**Department of Citywide Administrative Services**  
[www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/html/dres\\_menu.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/html/dres_menu.html)

\*View properties for auction by NYC, including information of lot size, zoning, and assessed value. Includes map image of each parcel.

**New York City Housing Authority**  
NYCHA Property Directory  
[www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/propertyguide.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/propertyguide.html)

click on "Contents"

\*Search for public housing units by address, development name, or block and lot numbers.

\*Determine management of each unit.

\*Determine what types of facilities are available at each development.