Using City Directories
To Determine the Date of Construction
For Your Urban Structure

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A good place to begin researching an urban structure is the City Directory. Directories have been published for Louisville as early as 1832. [They <u>were not</u> published for the years of 1862 – 1863 and 1942 – 1945.] Complete or near complete sets can be found at the Louisville Free Public Library (in digital format from 1838 – 1923 and print from 1923 - Current) *or* the University of Louisville Ekstrom Library. By starting with the most recent directory and working backwards, one can develop a complete listing of occupants at a single address. Occupancy, or lack of occupancy, is sometimes associated with house building or major remodeling. Often, this kind of search will yield an approximate date of construction.

There are four important factors to remember while researching your house:

1. This guide is useful only for buildings in the older areas of Louisville where specific records of street names, addresses and occupants were compiled by companies that published city directories (i.e., Edwards, Caron's, Polk, etc.).Rural structures were often not acknowledged at all in city directories or were listed in very vague terms (i.e. John Buchingham, house on south side of Brownsboro Turn-Pike between Bayle and Hite). For rural structures, therefore, a complete property deed search at the local County Courthouse will likely yield more pertinent information.
2. A City-wide reassessment of house and building numbers occurred in 1909. This required that any structure being traced that was built *before* 1909 must be cross referenced by address and then by the occupant's last name. Refer to the last page of this document to learn how to do this. If this step is omitted you will probably come up with an inaccurate construction date.
3. It is important to remember that the occupant of a given address may not be the actual building owner. Verification of a building ownership can only be determined by conducting a deed search.
4. The information contained in a directory reflects what was known the previous year.

Organization of City Directories

In order to use City Directories to research your house it is necessary to understand how they are organized. Each directory has three indexes or sections, which are explained in detail below.

1. <u>Index by Household or Last Name</u>: This section is arranged alphabetically. A typical entry might read:

   > Belknap, William R. Chairman of board
   > Belknap Hdwe & Mfg. Co., r 405 W. Ormsby av

The above example tells you the person's full name, occupation and/or place of employment and if he/she resided ("r") or boarded ("b") at the address indicated. Sometimes race ("c" – colored, "FMC" or "FWC" free man / woman of color) is specified and occasionally a spouse's

name will appear in parenthesis. A table of abbreviations found in the 1900 directory is seen here:

CARON'S
LOUISVILLE DIRECTORY.

VOLUME XXX . . . . 1900.

ABBREVIATIONS.

ab..........above
agt..........agent
A & O Mnfg Co..........Ahrens & Ott Mnfg Co
al..........alley
asst..........assistant
av..........avenue
a o..........accountant's office
a of d o..........auditor of disbursements office
a r o..auditor receipts office
B & O S W....Baltimore & Ohio S'thwestern Ry Co
bartndr..........bartender
bel..........below
bet..........between
b..........boards
bkkpr..........bookkeeper
bldg..........building
bldr..........builder
blk..........block
bkbndr..........bookbinder
Bourlier C & R Co..........Bourlier Cornice and Roofing Co
B M & H Co..........Brinly Miles & Hardy Co
brklayr..........bricklayer
C C C & St L Ry..........Cleveland Cincinnati Chicago & St Louis Ry
C C & I Co..........Central Coal and Iron Co
c a o car accountants office
carp..........carpenter
clk..........clerk
c..........colored
com mer..commission merchant
condr..........conductor
con f a o..........contracting freight agents office.
confectr..........confectioner
contr..........contractor
cor..........corner
C & O Ry..........Chesapeake & Ohio R'y
C-J..........Courier-Journal
C-J J P Co..........Courier-Journal Job Printing Co

dep..........deputy
dept..........department
dom..........domestic
E or e..........east
es..........east side
F C..........Falls City
g b a o..........general baggage agents office
g f o..........general freight office
g m o genl managers office
g p a o..........general passenger agents office
I C R R Co..........Illinois Central R R Co
(Inc)..........Incorporated
ins..........insurance
insp..........Inspector
lab..........laborer
lithog..........lithographer
Lou B & I Co..........Lou Bridge & Iron Co
Lou C W & Ry S Co..........Lou Car Wheel & Railway Supply Co
L H & St L Ry Co..........Louisville Henderson and St Louis Railway Co
Lou Ry Co..........Louisville Railway Co
mach..........machinist
mach hand..........machinehand
mdse..........merchandise
mkr..........maker
m m o..........master mechanics office
mnfr..........manufacturer
mngr..........manager
nr..........near
N or n..........north
N A..........New Albany
ne..........northeast
ns..........north side
nw..........northwest
opp..........opposite
paperhr..........paperhanger
pl..........place
p a o..........purchasing agents office
P..........Portland
photog..........photographer

P O..........postoffice
P P C Co..........Pullman Palace Car Co
pres..........president
prin..........principal
P C C & St L Ry Co..........Pittsburgh Cincin'ti Chicago & St Louis Ry Co
pur agt..........purchasing agent
r..........residence
rd..........road
ret..........retail
Rev..........Reverend
Ry M S..........Railway Mail Service
st..........street
stenog..........stenographer
S..........Shippingport
S or s..........south
se..........southeast
stonectr..........stonecutter
s o..........superintendents office
s t o..........superintendent transportation office
ss..........south side
sw..........southwest
sec..........secretary
supt..........superintendent
tel opr..........telegraph operator
treas..........treasurer
T D & W Mnfg Co..........Turner Day & Woolworth Mnfg Co
The Knadler P C & V Co..........The Knadler Pickle Cider & Vinegar Co
U C & L Co..........Union Cement & Lime Co
upholstr..........upholsterer
H W Tob Co..........H Weissinger Tob Co
W & S Life Ins Co..........Western and Southern Life Insurance Co
W or w..........west
ws..........west side
whol..........wholesale
wid..........widow
ydmstr..........yardmaster

2. Index by Street Address: This section, which first appeared in the 1884 Directory, is arranged alphabetically by street name then numerically by house number. It can be found in the middle of the book. A typical entry would look like this:

This entry tells you that Richards Milton lives on the Southwest corner of Debarr Street and Edwards. Note that several homes on this street are vacant.

When consulting the Street index it is important to remember the following:

- 100 house numbers have been allotted for each block or each main thoroughfare.
- Main Street is the dividing line between North and South.
- First Street is the dividing line between East and West.
- All Even numbered addresses will be found either on the South or West side of the street.

DEBARR, from Barret av east to Rubel av, bet Wickliffe av and Breckinridge.

1014 Schmidt H. S
1016 Metz Sallie
  ns Ruck Peter

Edwards Intersects

sw cor Richards Milton
1101 Reagan James
1116 Pontrich S. P
1117 Krauth William
1118 Vacant
1119 Braun P. V
1120 Holtz H. J
1121 Maydwell Thomas
1122 Vacant
1123 Vacant
1124 Hilger J. L
1125 Zimmerman J. L
1126 Holzheimer H. C
1127 Hoffman L. H
1128 Huesman F. B
1129 Vacant
1130 Pfitzner Carrie H
1131 Dickinson W. M., Jr
1132 Bott J., contractor
  Neckermann Leopold

DELAWARE, from Fifth to Sixth and from Eleventh west to Fifteenth, south of Lexington.

519 Cantrell Dorsey, c
  Loving Mary, c

3. Commercial or advertisement Index: This section is located toward the back of the directory and is arranged by trade or type of business (tailors, saloons, hardware, etc.)

Creameries.
(See also Dairymen and Milk Depots)
ARVIN & CO.
1603 Preston

This section tells you that Arvin & Co. was located in that year at 1603 Preston. It also suggests that users also consult *Dairymen* and *Milk Depots*. Some businesses also included advertisements and page numbers were they can be found in the directory. In addition to the

Commerical or Advertisment Index of businesses, the Filson Historical Society and the Louisville Free Public Library also have an Index of Louisville Businesses that may provide additional information.

Determining the Date of Construction For the Structure

Generally speaking, the oldest structures in Louisville are those closest to the center of town. The following date ranges were determined by the research staff of the Landmarks Commission (now known as Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission) after a thorough analysis of each area. They fall into two categories, the "broad period of significance" and the "major development" period.

The Broad Period of Significance:
These are broad date ranges for the years in which all of the architecturally and historically significant buildings in a given neighborhood were built.

The Major Development Period:
These are date ranges for the years when the majority of the structures in a given neighborhood were built.

Periods of Significance for the National Register Districts

	Broad Period of Significance	Major Development Period
Butchertown *	mid 1850's – 1900	1860 – 1890
Cherokee Triangle	1870 – 1914	1890 – 1915
Clifton	1870 – 1930	1880 – 1910
Crescent Hill	1840 – 1945	1890 – 1930
Highlands	1815 – 1940	1880 – 1893
Limerick *	1860 – 1925	1870 – 1900
Old Louisville	1850 – 1930	1883 – 1914
Parkland	1884 – 1920	1890 – 1915
Phoenix Hill *	1840 – 1900	1860 – 1890
Portland *	1830's – 1925	1860 – 1900
Russell	1870 – 1925	1870's – 1900
West Main Street	1870 – 1900	1880 – 1900

- These Louisville neighborhoods developed quite early and have some to the oldest structures in the city. The style, building placement and materials used in constructing the building will probably reflect the date ranges listed above. The majority of the structures in a given neighborhood will usually date from the *major development period*.
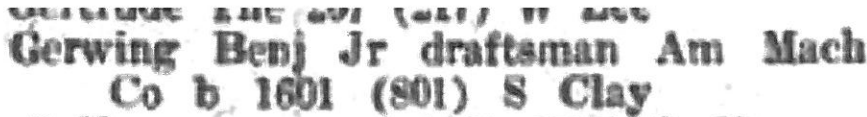
Post 1909 Structures

For buildings built after 1909, determining the probable construction date is as easy as looking up the address in a City Directory for a year you know the building was standing. Then, work backwards until a listing for your building can no longer be found. For instance, if you know your house stood in 1940, start with the directory for the year 1941. Look up the address in the section marked "Index by Street Address". Write down the year of the directory you using and the address and name of the occupant listed. Next go to the directory of the previous decade, 1931. If there is no listing in that directory, you can assume that the building dates from between 1930 and 1941. Now, find the listing for 1936. If you house is listed then, you know your house dates from between 1930 and 1935. If your house is vacant in 1932, and there is no listing in 1931, it can be assumed that constructed was completed in 1931, but no one had moved into the building by the time the data for the directory was gathered. Your work sheet should look something like this:

<u>1795 Yale Drive</u>

Year	Status	Name	Occupation
1940	Occupied	Mabel, Stout	Social Worker
1935	Occupied	Mabel, Stout	Social Worker
1932	Occupied	Mabel, Stout	Social Worker
1931	Vacant		
1930	No Listing	House constructed between 1929 and 1930.	

As you can see, determining the date of your structure is basically a process of elimination. If a building wasn't listed in a given year it probably hadn't been built yet. To ensure the accuracy of your research double-check the occupancy close to the years in which the address appears as either "vacant" or was not listed at all because occasionally addresses were omitted.

1885 – 1909 Structures

In 1909, most of the houses and building addresses in Louisville were changed. As the city evolved, numbers were not always assigned to houses in a logical manner. In response, addresses were changed to insure consistency. In order to find an address prior to 1909, start with the 1909 directory. First look for the address you are interested in the Street Index. Write down the name of the person who occupied that structure. Now, still using the same 1909 directory, turn to the Index by Household or Last Name and look up that person's name. It will give the address in 1909 next to the occupants name and in parenthesis it will give the new address.

Gerwing Benj Jr draftsman Am Mach Co b 1601 (801) S Clay

For example, prior to 1909 Benjamin Gerwing on the previous page, a draftsman for American Machine Co., boarded at 1601 South Clay. Even though he did not move, his new (and future) address is 801 South Clay. This old address is the address you will use to work backwards until your address no longer appears. Follow the same research method you would for the Post 1909 Structure. If no address appears in parenthesis ( ) next to the 1909 address or if there is an * next to the 1909 address then the old address and the new address are the same.

Pre – 1884 Structures

1884 was the first year in which an "Index by Street Address" was included in Louisville City Directories. Prior to 1884, only the Index by household or Last Name and the Commercial or Advertisement Index were included. Therefore, if your structure is listed in the 1884 Directory, you need to make a note of the occupants name in that year and follow that particular name back in time. When the name you are tracing is no longer listed at the address you are researching, then this may be the year the structure was built (assuming this person was its first occupant). Since the occupancy of any structure could change over time, this method is not full proof. It is very important then that you do not lose your chain of occupancy.

An alternative to using City Directories is to conduct a Deed Search at Deed Room of the Jefferson County Clerk's Office. It is located at 527 W. Jefferson St., Room 204. The general principal of the search is to begin with the current owner of the property (known as the Grantee) to learn the name of the previous owner (known as the Grantor) and work backwards in time until the original owner is found – thus providing the approximate date of construction.